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SYLLABUSES
FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ENGLISH LITERATURE

(ADVANCED LEVEL)

PREPARED BY
THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
RECOMMENDED FOR USE IN SCHOOLS BY
THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
HONG KONG
1995
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PREAMBLE

This syllabus is one of a series prepared for use in secondary schools by the Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong. The Curriculum Development Council, together with its co-ordinating committees and subject committees, is widely representative of the local educational community. Its membership includes heads of schools and practising teachers from government and non-government schools, lecturers from tertiary and teacher education institutions, officers of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority and those of the Curriculum Development Institute, the Advisory Inspectorate and other divisions of the Education Department.

All syllabuses prepared by the Curriculum Development Council for the sixth form will lead to appropriate papers of the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination.

This syllabus is recommended for use in Secondary 6 and 7 by the Education Department. Once the syllabus has been implemented, progress will be monitored by the Advisory Inspectorate and the Curriculum Development Institute of the Education Department. This will enable the English Literature Subject Committee (Sixth Form) of the Curriculum Development Council to review the syllabus from time to time in the light of teaching and learning experiences.

All comments and suggestions on the syllabus may be sent to:

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Report of the Working Group on Sixth Form Education, published in July 1989, expressed concern for the narrowly-based Sixth Form course patterns. To provide a sufficiently broad curriculum to meet the varied needs of Sixth Form students, one of its key recommendations was the introduction of the Advanced Supplementary Level (ASL) concept which would enable students to study additional subjects contrasting with or complementing their Advanced Level courses. In response to this Report, there were suggestions to restructure the Advanced Level (AL) English Literature syllabus by modifying one of the two papers as the ASL. Subsequently, with the ASL English Literature as a subset of the AL English Literature, the existing syllabus has to be revised.

This syllabus offers a choice of topics. The topics or themes chosen integrate various components of the paper and help students to see the interrelationships and interconnections between texts, films, portfolio work and other requirements. At the same time, the curriculum relates the teaching/learning taking place in the classroom to issues of significance taking place in the outside world. In other words, the study of literature is no longer the study of a self-sufficient, internal and isolated discipline. Rather, the study of literature constantly involves students in relating what 'happens' in literature to what happens in contemporary societies, in Hong Kong and, in the wider context, in the world at large.

In terms of approach, the proposed syllabus lays more emphasis on student-centred methodology and personal responses. Students are given the opportunity to react and respond to the topic they have chosen to study or deal with. They are encouraged to be self-dependent and self-accountable, which is very different from the kind of transmissive learning which many students in Hong Kong have been used to.
2. CURRICULUM GUIDE

2.1 Aims and Objectives

The Advanced Level English Literature syllabus offers a course of study which enables students to:

(a) understand and appreciate literary texts, contemporary writings, and related cultural forms;
(b) enhance their awareness of the relationship between literature and society;
(c) develop their critical and analytical skills;
(d) further improve their competence in the use of English;
(e) encourage self-expression and creativity.

2.2 Content

The main focus of the Advanced Level English Literature curriculum is on the relationship between what students have read or seen and issues of significance or interest in Hong Kong and/or around the world. This is achieved through two parts - a comparative study of texts and films on the one hand and an in-depth study of a few chosen texts on the other.

In the first part, films and texts are chosen according to selected topics. These topics may include genres, themes or areas of study. The topic provides a point of comparison around which the study of the chosen texts and films develops. The use of a portfolio provides opportunities for students to express themselves more freely, independently and imaginatively. The portfolio includes a journal and written assignment. Through the writing of the journal, students keep a record of personal responses, feelings and aspirations which have been prompted by the texts and films they have studied. The written assignment may be in the form of a film, book or drama review, an analytical essay or a project. Students are encouraged to make connections between what they read and things occurring in Hong Kong and around the world. Cross-cultural references including materials from other cultural media such as sculpture and photography can also be included.

The second part requires in-depth analysis and comparison of prescribed texts as well as literary appreciation of unseen passages. Prescribed texts are also chosen under selected topics. These topics may refer to a period, theme or the work of one particular writer. Students are
also required to analyse unseen passages of prose and verse related thematically to the topic chosen. Students will be expected to discuss and compare content and form, showing comprehension of the meaning and appreciation of the style of the passages.

2.3 Teacher Role

Students are encouraged to react with and respond to the topic they have chosen to study. The teacher can help students to explore and discover for themselves the connections between literature and society through topics they are dealing with. This approach lays a great deal of emphasis on student-centred methodology and personal responses. Extensive help from the teacher may be needed when it comes to the in-depth study and analysis of more literary texts. However, the teacher must aim to move as soon as possible from playing the dominant role in the classroom to being a facilitator and helper rather than an instructor. Students must be helped to become responsible for their own learning, and to realize clearly that there are no correct viewpoints in the study of literature. The aim is to develop one's own opinions in such a way that one can express them lucidly and defend them rationally. The teacher's job is to show students how to approach the subject, to ask questions and to suggest tasks. It is not just to give notes and tell them what to think.

2.4 Suggested Teaching Schedule and Time Allocation

The suggested time allocation is based on eight periods per week for two years (approximately 46 weeks). Besides the time allocated for instructional lectures, discussions, group work/individual tutorials, etc. to be conducted together with the teacher and students, a significant amount of studying and learning should also take place outside the classroom, e.g. reading of texts, viewing of films, writing of the journal, and other types of course work and activities. The importance of group work and individual tutorials, which constitute a regular feature of the teaching/learning process, is also stressed. Such activities provide opportunities for teachers to help students to be more self-motivating and independent in exploring and discovering for themselves the substance, significance and interconnections between what they read/see and write. Teachers are strongly advised to exercise flexibility and economy in conducting activities in the classroom. For example, it is quite possible to do group work and individual tutorials at the same time. Instructional lectures can be alternated with class discussion, group discussion and tutorials.
The following are some suggestions for the time allocation and teaching schedule which propose one way of organising and time-tabling the two-year AL English Literature curriculum. It must not be interpreted as laying down hard and fast rules to be rigidly followed. Important factors such as teaching conditions and teachers' preferences and priorities should be taken into consideration in working out the most appropriate arrangement for individual schools.

A Suggested Time Allocation for the 2-year AL Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Number of periods</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study of prescribed films &amp; texts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set texts:2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26 periods for each text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films:2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12 periods for each film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(journal writing &amp; other types of writing/project)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work/individual tutorials</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Time to be spent on global treatment of topics/themes, personal responses and reactions to set texts and films, advice and guidance on portfolio work and other assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study of prescribed texts &amp; literary appreciation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary appreciation</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Equal emphasis to be put on unseen passages of both prose and verse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set texts:3 or 2</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25 periods for each of the 3 prescribed texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work/individual tutorials</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Time to be spent on discussions and treatment of areas of study for the prescribed texts in second part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>365</td>
<td>8 periods for approximately 46 weeks.</td>
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A Suggested Teaching Schedule and Breakdown of the Time Allocation

**Number of periods**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Secondary 6</th>
<th>Secondary 7</th>
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<td>Set texts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary appreciation</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work/individual tutorials</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (365 periods)</strong></td>
<td><strong>241</strong></td>
<td><strong>124</strong></td>
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2.5 Tutorials

Tutorials can be used for discussion of global and specific issues, for discussion of topics selected by the students, and for introducing a variety of viewpoints so that students become aware that a universally accepted interpretation is not always possible. A tutorial need not necessarily take a whole period: 2 or 3 mini-tutorials may be used from time to time. However, the length of the tutorial should be adjusted to the needs of the students. In order to provide more individual attention for the students while conducting this sort of advisory work, teachers will have to think of a classroom in which many activities can be performed simultaneously: some students may be doing research on certain topics in the library, some may be viewing the set films, some may be working on various activities involved with a film they have been observing, some may be writing up part of their journal.

2.6 Physical Arrangements

As schools are different, it is not easy to produce general advice. There will be full sessions of the class, e.g. when tackling the prescribed texts, films and unseen prose/verse passages, as well as many lessons which
involve students working on their own or helping each other in groups while the teacher is talking to other small groups of students. Obviously, if it is possible, it would be better if more than one room were available (or use be made of the library). It is part of the rationale of the present sixth form curriculum initiative that sixth formers be trained to be more independent and responsible for their own studies.
3. TEACHING PRESCRIBED TEXTS

3.1 An Overview

The first two weeks of the AL course may be used as an introduction. Its aim is to promote interest in the subject and to allow students to take part in the kinds of activities that will help them engage with the texts. For example, the teacher may select the openings of several short stories and ask students to discuss in groups the role, attitude and tone of the narrator. They may also be encouraged to note any questions, problems, uncertainties that they may have and share them with their peers. This process can help students come to an initial grasp of the text and indicate to the teacher the possible difficulties and problems that students have.

Students must engage themselves with the texts and avoid uncritical acceptance. An early activity could be for them to say what aspects of the texts they like and what they do not like, and account for their opinion. Since they are reading the text without too much guidance from the teacher, their initial impressions are probably fragmentary ones. Nevertheless, they should be given the chance to find their way into the text before it is discussed in detail.

Another concern of the teacher is the diversity in the class. Some students may have studied the subject at secondary level while others may be new to it. Some are avid readers and others may never have read through a novel on their own. Some are confident and willing to tackle a text independently but many will be afraid to venture beyond the security of the teacher’s or critic’s opinions. To encourage the development of independent critical abilities, it is helpful to provide many group activities, such as discussions, reading aloud of poems or acting short extracts from plays. Such activities allow for the exploration of texts, however tentative, and the sharing of ideas among peers helps to reinforce the view that there is no single correct reading of a text. In designing questions and activities for these groups, it is also important to note the particular stage of learning students are in. For example, students in the preliminary stage of reading a text may find it difficult to answer generalised questions such as the writer’s attitude or the main themes.

3.2 Teaching Prescribed Texts for the study of Texts & Films

(a) A useful general guideline would be for teachers, at the beginning of
the course, to approach one text first with the students and then move on to the wider social, political and role-relationship issues involved before comparing the text with another text or film from the same topic area. The students' first response to the text will be conditioned by what they expect to get from the novel, their cultural background and their assumptions about society, human relationships and moral issues. The teacher should lead them to question these assumptions and to broaden their perspectives.

(b) The class must obviously read the books carefully. It might be helpful to spend some time on vocabulary associated with the topic/subject. As much as possible this should be elicited from the students themselves. The teacher might like to produce helpful worksheets for the students to fill in as they read. This will direct their thoughts to potentially interesting issues, and help them keep the main events in focus.

(c) The emphasis in the study of prescribed texts & films is on the treatment of themes, relationships and issues. Teachers may include the following topics of discussion with the class: plot, character and motivation, point-of-view, the role of the narrator, the use of clues and hints, the resolution of problems and conflicts, the ending, the ordering of the time sequence, the use of flashbacks, fantasy elements and stylistic features.

(d) The teacher may choose key episodes for close reading and analysis in class. These sessions need not be lengthy ones. The teacher can walk around the classroom and join in with the group. The teacher's role here is:
- to stimulate discussion, ask questions and challenge the views of the students
- to help students articulate and justify their opinions.

(e) To save labour, each student can be given a different task (i.e. gather information on one character, track a relationship, think about the setting, look for stereotypes, investigate symbolism, etc.) Students can make presentations on their findings and circulate short papers for discussion and improvement. Eventually, they should produce their own set of notes based on open, collaborative discussion of the text. As far as possible the teacher should negotiate with students which tasks they would like to do, drawing on individual interests.
and expertise.

(f) The teacher should encourage the students to read relevant texts other than those prescribed. Group discussion should flow from such reading.

3.3 Teaching prescribed texts for the study of Texts & Literary Appreciation

It is important for students to realise that literary texts do not have a fixed meaning. There may not be a single 'correct' interpretation for all times. Each age may bring with it its own re-interpretation of the text. Students should develop an ability to form valid judgement and discriminate between different readings/interpretations of the text. They should also be reassured that their views about a text may change during the course. Rather than rushing to the critic, students can be encouraged to build on their responses to the text and refine and organise them to form their own interpretations.

(a) Novels

The length of a novel means that it is difficult for students to grasp it as a whole. It may be a good idea to divide the novel into sections, similar to presenting it in serial form. Class discussions may focus on certain aspects of the text. For example, certain passages may be used to explore the use of the narrator's voice and the relationship established between the writer, narrator and reader. Students may also be asked to select linguistic features which attract attention by deviance and this can be developed into a discussion of the writer's style. A character study may draw attention to how the writer manipulates the reader's sympathy towards a character. Students have to become more alert as they read and notice changes in perspective, tone and mood which may reflect the author's deliberate choices. After examining the parts of a novel, the analysis can be extended to see how the different sections function to achieve the total effect.

(b) Plays

Plays are written primarily for the stage and meaning is created through the interaction between actors and audience. While it is a valuable experience playing recordings or videos, or even taking a class to
performances, it must be pointed out to students that each production carries
a particular interpretation of the play and students should not treat it as the
only possible rendering.

The dramatic qualities of a play cannot be fully appreciated unless
students have some experience of the theatre, whether as actors or members
of the audience. Background issues such as the particular theatrical
conventions the playwright is working with, or rebelling against, help to
enrich the understanding of the play.

Group activities in which students approach the text as directors and
actors would help to highlight aspects of the development of characters or
the dramatic situation. It may be an interesting activity for students to try out
the basic situation in the play before they read it. For example, they may
improvise a scene involving two tramps with nothing to do or deciding what
the daughters would do if their rich father is about to divide his fortune
before reading Waiting for Godot or King Lear.

Further suggestions for handling the topic Shakespeare Our
Contemporary can be found in Appendix III.

(c) Poetry

The experience of reading a poem aloud is valuable for students. Only
then do the patterns of sound, which form an integral part of the meaning
and experience of a poem, become prominent. As many students have
limited exposure to the various poetic forms, it is important to encourage
students to read a wide range of poems. Chapter 6 on Teaching Literary
Appreciation contains a list of questions which teachers may find useful in
helping students develop their own responses. The selection of poems may
focus on areas of interest, such as the use of rhythm, sound, images,
symbols, diction or choice of poetic personae. Through wide reading of
poetry, students should also develop the awareness that poetry is not just
about philosophical themes and that poets often write for the pleasure of
working with words. Additional activities for the study of poetry includes
creative writing or setting a poem to music. After reading a selected number
of poems by a poet, students may be asked to read more poems by the same
poet and decide why and how the selection was made.
3.4 Schools of literary criticism

Literature is taught for many reasons, and an enormous amount of work has been done on the theory of literary criticism. Students at the senior secondary stage do not need to be aware of the extremely difficult ideas behind such schools of thought as Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, New Historicism and socio-criticism, but they should be made aware of some of the insights that these different schools of criticism offer in the interpretation of texts.

The following list is far from exhaustive or definitive, but is offered to help teachers orient their thoughts:

1. Humanistic criticism
Here the main interest is in discussing the moral issues raised by the work of literature. Great emphasis is put on character, sentiment and sincerity. This is probably the easiest and most appealing form of criticism for students at this stage. The text is treated as in some way ‘real’, rather than as a literary artefact, and fine moral distinctions are made.

2. Language-based criticism
Some people believe in the study of literature as a means to improve style. This view is rather out of fashion nowadays, however the new discipline of linguistics has influenced one group of critics, resulting in the development of an approach referred to as stylistics. Close attention is paid to such matters as choice of diction, use of different parts of speech and different types of clause, punctuation and the connotations evoked by the style. The approach is valid for all types of texts, but is most manageable when handling verse.

3. Genre-based criticism
For example, one can study the detective story, beginning with Poe and Conan Doyle, and its subsequent development into different sub-genres such as the hard American private eye (Chandler & Hammett), or the eccentric amateur (Chesterton & Christie). The genre has its own requirements and rules, is popular with a certain audience, and can tell us a lot about public perceptions of such matters as law and order and crime. The method is especially suitable for use with less high-brow and classic texts, as the writers are more likely to cleave closely to generic expectations.
4. **Marxist-influenced criticism**
This is interested in investigating the type of society that might produce the text being studied and in exploring the patterns of economic behaviour and exploitation revealed in it. A Marxist critic is interested, for example, in the tensions among usury, banking, mercantile capitalism and aristocratic wealth in *A Merchant of Venice*, and Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are seen as products of a new middle class establishing itself in the face of the old aristocracy. The approach serves to remind us that works of literature are produced by people who need to earn a living, and often reflect an ideology typical of their class.

5. **Feminist criticism**
This is closely related to Marxist criticism. The most prominent form this takes is feminist criticism that explores the ways in which men have portrayed women in their writing, stereotyping and marginalising them. It is also interested in the growth of writing by women, and the question as to whether women can/should use the same literary forms and language as men, or need to develop their own literature.

6. **Post-colonial criticism**
Afro-American critics have also explored the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have been reflected in literature. Such critics might, for example, approach *The Tempest* as a play about Prospero's colonisation of the island and enslavement of the aboriginal population (Ariel and Caliban).

7. **Ideology-based criticism**
This is closely related to the last three, and involves an exploration of the values inherent in the text, e.g. the attitudes to work, the construction of gender roles, political stance, moral beliefs, religious views, feelings about science, and so on.

8. **Historical criticism**
This requires the study of the history of a language's literature, and the study of the relationship between a society and the literature it produces.

9. **Biographical criticism**
Here the interest is in the writer as a person. The approach risks
being rather naive in that the relationship between someone’s life and what they write is far from being a direct one, but the lives of such writers as Emily Dickinson are obviously fascinating and can be seen as crucial to their literary output.

10. Psychoanalytic criticism
Critics of this school use the theories of Freud and Jung. The writer or the characters in a work of literature may be psychoanalysed. Maybe the most famous example of this type of criticism is the reading of Hamlet as a play about Hamlet’s Oedipal feelings about Hamlet the elder, Claudius and Gertrude.

11. Deconstruction
This is not an approach that is easy to summarise, but can perhaps be seen as offering two special insights.

i. One should look for the problems in a text rather than try to blind oneself to them. For example, from this perspective, Antonio truly becomes the heart of A Merchant of Venice: he is sad for no reason; he has an ambiguous relationship with Bassanio; he is kindly, but treats Shylock abominably; he is aristocratic, but a merchant, and he is rich, yet he is bankrupt. Many of the tensions in Shakespearean society can thus be located in the character of Antonio.

ii. Deconstructionism denies that meaning can be firmly established. We read Shakespeare, but we are not sixteenth century English people, and the texts themselves are not always necessarily accurate. Words and ideas are always shifting. There is nothing behind a text: it is only a web of words. This encourages free interpretation. Readers are released to enjoy a text and to play with it. Many find the idea too radical, but it encourages originality and alerts us to the fact that when we study literature, we are not seeking hard fact or truth but enjoying the free flow of stimulating ideas.
4. TEACHING PRESCRIBED FILMS

4.1 Film Criticism

A film can be approached in the first instance in much the same way as a literary work. Some avant-garde cinema can be compared to poetry, but the normal feature film has many of the same characteristics as the novel or the play. Students when watching a film, and later when discussing it, should bear in mind the following areas of interest.

1. The plot
   How coherent is it?
   If it sets out to be realistic, is it convincing?
   Is the motivation credible?
   Does the ending satisfactorily resolve the story?

2. The dialogue (Though this is not a particularly noteworthy element of Hollywood films, and is at times rather sparse.)

3. The characterisation
   Are the characters stereotypes (e.g., the black-hearted villain), or more rounded?
   How sympathetic are they?
   How credible are they?
   Do they change in the course of the action?

4. The message
   What is the film trying to tell us about life e.g. the need for strong government/the abuses of big business/the dangers of technology?

5. Symbolism
   This often lies in the detail of the film. Examples include: the pigeons, symbols of peace and also of betrayal in On the Waterfront; the playing of A Midsummer Night’s Dream in the dead of winter in The Dead Poet’s Society, and the model cathedral in The Elephant Man. There is a lot of sexual/phallic imagery connected with guns in many films. Colour is frequently symbolic, e.g. women dressed in red are usually dangerous in some way.

6. The ‘sub-text’ - the ideas, values and attitudes implicit in the film. This is rather similar to the message, but is far less conscious. In
some interesting cases the overt message and the sub-text can even be seen to be in conflict. (The attitude to women in the *Alien* series is a case in point.) An example of sub-text is that in *Jaws* it is weak men and promiscuous or ill-behaved females who tend to get killed.

7. **Treatment of gender and racial issues**
   This is often a matter of the sub-text, but should be especially noted. For example, in *Star Wars* and *The Terminator* there are major female characters, but in both cases they have to be rescued by men. Black people have often been portrayed unsympathetically in American cinema, and some recent films have shown hostility towards the Japanese. Gay/lesbian film criticism has objected strongly to the stereotyping of homosexuality in many films.

8. **The director**
   One cannot simply equate a director with an author, as the balance of power among the studio, the producer, the director, the stars and the editors varies considerably. That having been said, there are many directors who do control their own work and develop a recognisable style, showing concern for the same issues from film to film. In these cases, it is interesting to compare the films of a director.

9. **The genre**
   Many films belong to recognisable categories, such as the Western, the horror film, film noir, etc. Students should consider how typical of its genre a film is, and where it deviates from expectations.

   Although students are unlikely to have seen enough films to spot many examples, there is also the question of 'quotation', eg. a director, such as Woody Allen, may consciously refer to incidents in earlier classic movies. The motive may vary from parody to admiration.

10. **The audience**
    Who was the film made for? How commercial is it? How was it made suitable for its target audience?

11. **Current issues**
    What issues contemporary with the film might have influenced it? eg. traces of the Vietnam conflict can be found in many films that are
not ostensibly about that subject; a lot of recent Hollywood films involve single-parent families, and *Bram Stocker’s Dracula*, although not ‘about’ AIDS, is likely to make anyone think about the disease.

12. **Psychoanalytic interpretations**

Some directors consciously refer to Freudian and Jungian theories (eg. Hitchcock’s *Psycho*), and many others reflect Oedipal conflicts. Horror films can often be read as the escape of the id and its battle with the ego and superego.

There are other areas in which a film is different from a piece of writing, and the following also need careful consideration:

a. **The performance**

   This covers the quality of the acting and the suitability of the casting.

b. **Visual matters**

   Does the director have any favourite shots (eg. close-ups)?

   How long are the shots? European films usually have much longer shots than Hollywood movies, giving a different sense of pace.

   Are there any special effects used?

   Are there any special shots? For example, horror films sometimes use angled shots to express imbalance and disturbance. Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* is rich in famous shots.

   Does the film favour one colour or shade (this is a matter of lighting and film stock)?

   How are the transitions managed? (Bertolucci’s *Bram Stocker’s Dracula* is very rich in interesting transitions).

   How expensive was the film? Was it made on the epic scale with thousands of extras, or was it low-budget? What locations were used? (eg. *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Last Emperor*).

c. **The sound-track**

   This refers to the choice of music and theme songs, eg. Williams’ score for *Star Wars*, the use of classical music in 2001, or the use
of discordant, electronic music in some horror movies.

Finally, using all these aspects of the film, the student should be ready to evaluate it and give a personal response e.g. "This film is very rich in ideas, but at times loses narrative flow and tension." or "The film is visually exquisite, but lacks any real message." "The film is enjoyable, but ultimately worthless, mindless escapism."

If a student wishes to write a project based on film, he or she should either choose a topic involving a few films or write extensively about one film in particular.

4.2 Writing about films

Ideas for writing about films might include:

1. An analytical essay on Hitchcock's films:
   i Hitchcock's career and principal interests
   ii Plot reviews
   iii Special effects and techniques
   iv Use of symbolism
   v Personal response

Further ideas can include:

2. The sci-fi films of James Cameron
   Different approaches to filming Agatha Christie stories
   Images of the police in four 1995 movies
   Music and classic horror films
   OR

3. A film review of Bertolucci's Little Buddha:
   i Bertolucci's earlier work and style
   ii Plot review
   iii A successful combination?
   iv Acting
   v Influence of Spielberg?
   vi Evaluation

Suggested reference:
Sobchack & Sobchack, An Introduction to Film (Harper Collins)
5. TEACHING PORTFOLIO WORK

5.1 General Remarks

The inclusion of portfolio work in the syllabus is to allow students to express their personal responses to the topic or theme that they are studying. This is to meet the objectives of the syllabus which are to develop students’ critical and analytical skills and to encourage self-expression and creativity. The portfolio work provides opportunities for students to reflect more deeply on issues and themes learned in the course and to develop sharper sensitivity to and awareness of their personal experience and what is going on in the world.

5.2 The Journal

This part should not be treated as a diary in which students simply record the mundane routine of their everyday events. Instead, students should express their reactions and responses to the ideas, issues and themes discussed in the set texts or characters depicted by the writers or the directors. When students have developed the habit of expressing their thoughts, they should then broaden the scope of their work by connecting and associating what they have learnt from the course with wider current and global issues and bring in material from the world around them. The emphasis in this part is students’ critical insight and response to personal experience and evaluation of such thoughts and responses, as well as their ability to note and make connection between texts and personal experience. Teachers can start asking students to write their journal entries at the beginning of S6 and encourage them to respond to the set text first and then discuss global issues later. Students should be given opportunities to express their doubts and worries about the course, too. However, this should not be the main focus of the work. In short, the journal should be treated as a vehicle for students to express personal thoughts and opinions.

The style of the journal should be personal, friendly and casual. Students should feel free to write in a natural and spontaneous way. Variety of style and experiences should also be encouraged. There is no word limit for an entry and entries may vary in length. Since students have to submit a journal which extends over a period of four months, a variety of topics is recommended.

Students can respond to articles from magazines, newspapers, the
news, films, books and other such like material in the mass media. As for the language, students should demonstrate their strength in expressing their thoughts coherently.

Further guidelines on teaching the journal can be found in Appendix I.

5.3 Written Assignment

The written assignment is a more substantial piece of work than the journal which consists of regular smaller contributions rather than one or more larger pieces of work. The written assignment consists of writing focused on one theme OR a serious piece of critical prose, and may be accompanied by visual illustrations. The teacher must not be bullied by the students into giving too much help on this. To help students think of profitable topics, the teacher may like to circulate a list of ideas, but more in the hope that it will stimulate students into producing their own ideas than that they will follow the suggestions. Students should develop informed responses by reflecting on various relevant first and second hand source materials (e.g. their own personal observations and experience, accounts derived from interviews and discussions, as well as printed and audio-visual materials.)

Students should be encouraged to show creativity and variety in their choice and treatment of subject. In this connection, they should avoid writing, for instance, reviews on the same films as chosen by fellow students, or adopting the same subject in their analytical essay/project. Further guidelines on the writing of film reviews can be found in Appendix II.

Where students have consulted, quoted or applied particular materials in the course of producing a portfolio task, they should ensure that these sources are clearly acknowledged by way of footnotes (where relevant) as well as a bibliography at the end of the task. Students must be warned that plagiarism will be heavily penalised.

Students should ensure that all citations (e.g. of documentary materials) are relevantly, lucidly and succinctly communicated. In other words, students should avoid presenting lengthy chunks of materials without appraising their significance and relevance to the subject under study. Rather, they should aim at elucidating and validating their own point of view, and
presenting it in self-developed discourse throughout.

The timetable could be roughly as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S6</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>Choose topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>First draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Second draft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the outline stage the teacher should have a long personal talk with the student, and by asking questions help direct their thoughts in profitable directions. Each student could present their outline to the full class so that everyone could make suggestions which may be accepted or refused. The first draft could undergo peer-evaluation. Copies could be circulated to a few peer-readers with a form for making comments and asking for clarification. The teacher will comment and query, but not correct or rewrite. Teachers’ guidance of the student’s draft should be limited to pointing out the following:

- problems with the overall direction of the piece of work
- evaluation of the main argument
- ideas (sequence in presentation, expansion/elaboration, redundancy and suitability of examples chosen by the students)

Grave problems in English should be indicated, but it is up to the students to solve the problems to the best of their ability. Overpolished products will merely be suspicious. It is recommended that the teacher should read no more than one outline and two drafts from a student. The teacher’s assessment of the first draft could provide useful input for the end-of-year grade. The student’s work on the journal should be assessed as a continuous process by the teacher rather than as the finished product seen by the HKEA markers. The assessment mark for the journal and the second draft of the written assignment can similarly be used for the final S7 grade. Students should be given credit for their efforts when the final product is evaluated.
6. TEACHING LITERARY APPRECIATION

6.1 Introduction

The skills required in this section are basically the same as those used in the study of the set texts, though in a rather more concentrated form. As the passages are unseen, however, this section can cause difficulty and anxiety for students. It is important therefore that students be taught to ask the right questions, so that they might develop the confidence to analyse poetry and prose on their own. Probably the best strategy is for the teacher to present some examples at first, asking of them questions similar to those which follow. This will draw attention to the sort of detail that requires comment and the appropriate terms and style with which to communicate it. Passages chosen might be suitably graded, starting from the simpler ones to the more difficult, or be chosen to highlight different aspects of poetry and prose which the teacher wishes to draw attention to. After this introductory period, students could be asked to work individually, in pairs or in groups, and to take turns to make their own presentations.

Teachers should expose students to both prose and verse that are related thematically to the topic chosen.

6.2 Use of questions

The following are some of the questions which might assist students in approaching unseen passages. Teachers can develop the questioning further as different passages require.

**Subject**
- How is it developed?
- How is it structured?

**Point of view**
- Who is the speaker? or Who is doing the narrating or describing?
- What is the speaker's perspective?
- How involved or detached is s/he?

**Tone**
- What is revealed of the speaker's/author's personality?
- What is his/her situation and what is his/her sense of that situation?
- Is there an implied audience?
-What relationship is established between him/her and the audience? How?
-What attitudes are implied towards his/her subject?
-How serious is s/he?
-Is s/he being ironic? What techniques are used to point up the irony? Is the irony pervasive or incidental?

**Diction**
-What are the key words?
-Do they connect to form a pattern of any kind?
-How does the choice of words contribute to the tone of the passage?
-How formal or informal is it?
-Is it elevated or everyday, colloquial?
-Is it consistent?
-If not, what effects are created by mixing different registers?

**Imagery**
-Is it occasional or persistent?
-Is there a pattern to it?
-If so, how is it used and to what effect?
-Does it assist with the structure of the passage?
-Does it help define the writer’s tone?
-Does it appeal to one or more of the senses?
-Is it appropriate?

**Rhythm**
-Does the poem have a regular rhythm or metre?
-If so, what effects are created by departure from it?
-What use is made of punctuation (enjambment, caesura) to control the rhythm?
-Is there any repetition of phrases or lines?
-If so, what is the effect?
-Is the rhythm of the prose passage colloquial or in some way stylized?
-If the latter, what use is made of rhetorical devices such as parallelism, repetition and climax and to what effect?
-Is the sentence structure conventional or in some way irregular?
-What kind of sentence structure predominates?
-What variation is there in sentence structure and length?
-What effects are created by the variation?

**Syntax**
-What part does syntax play in the structure of the poem?
-Has any violence been done to conventional word order?
-Has any words been left out?
-Has words been given a new grammatical function?
-If so with what effect?

Sound
-Is there a regular rhyme scheme?
-If so, what function does it serve?
-Is it important structurally?
-Does it in some way reflect the subject matter?
-Do any individual rhymes draw attention to themselves?
-Do any sounds predominate?
-If so, what effect do they have on the tone or the mood of the passage?
-What use is made of alliteration and assonance?

6.3 General

Students should note that though it is convenient here to speak of
these aspects (diction, rhythm, etc) as if they were separate they are in fact
interdependent as the interrelatedness of some of the questions
demonstrates.

The same is true of the conventional distinction made between form
and content. They are indivisible. So it is not sufficient to merely summarise
the content of the passages, or to simply point out examples of various
techniques without commenting on how they are used and to what effect.
Nor should form and content be discussed separately e.g. by first
paraphrasing the passages and then comparing their techniques. The aim
should be to explain the similarities and differences in how the two passages
work. For example, if the two passages have a similar theme, but the theme
is treated differently, then students should first examine how the theme is
handled in one of the passages before analysing the differences in treatment
in the other.

At the same time, it should be stressed that a dry technical analysis
of the passages is no more adequate than a paraphrase of their contents.
Students should have the courage and confidence to express their personal
opinions and feelings about the passages. If, for example, a student is
embarrassed or irritated by what s/he regards as sentimentality or
pretentiousness in a passage then s/he should say so, as long as s/he
supports his/her view with reasoned argument. Personal feelings are not a
substitute for criticism, but they may enhance it.

Note: Suggested teacher's reference for prose & poetry appreciation:

1. Andrew Mayne & John Shuttleworth, *Considering Prose* (Hodder & Stoughton)

7. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

7.1 Assessment of the study of prescribed texts and films

Assessment of this part is intended to cover the following:

Knowledge of the content of the books and films

Understanding & appreciation of representative literary texts, contemporary writings, and related cultural forms

Awareness of the relationship between literature and society

Judgment through development of critical skills and analytical skills

Expression 
(i) competence in the use of English
(ii) free and creative expression

7.2 Assessment criteria

Essays

In the assessment of essays, the teacher is looking for an essay which is fully relevant, that notes connections, relationships, complexities and possible alternative readings. There should be full coverage of the content, with arguments well-supported by reference to the books and films. The structure should be progressively developed, focused and persuasive. In style, it should be clean, clear, well-written and grammatically correct.

All too often, the average essay is fairly superficial, lacks insight and fails to tackle the question critically although its content may be largely relevant, adequate and mostly accurate. There may be an attempt at an argument though it may not be fully controlled. Its style is comprehensible but it lacks fluency and contains some grammatical errors. Students should be reminded to steer away from mere story-telling or summarising. An essay which is memorised, incomplete or which ignores the question completely can only be considered weak.

The Journal

In the assessment of the journal, the teacher is looking for a detailed
and receptive response to the reading and viewing and other creative stimuli. The student should note connections, relationships and possibly ambiguities. The content should reveal both subjectivity and objectivity. Originality should be encouraged. The inclusion of good visual material may be an asset, though not obligatory. The structure may be objective, subjective or anecdotal but should contain developing themes and ideas arising, possibly recurring and forming a sound argument. The style should be appropriate to the material being used and show a good command of the language. Experimentation may be rewarded.

**The Written Assignment**

The written assignment should display an evident mastery and appreciation of the form in which the work is created, whether it be a film, book or drama review, project or analytical essay. The style and register should be appropriate to the topic chosen. There should preferably be intelligent and original use of material in the form appropriate to the task and topic chosen. The student should be able to develop different facets of the topic and present materials logically and coherently.

7.3 **Guidelines for teachers to assessing portfolio work**

The study of texts and films in general has been introduced to encourage students to become more self-reliant and resourceful. This will require a corresponding shift in the role of the teacher. Lessons will become less teacher oriented and the teacher will be expected to act more as an advisor/tutor than a direct disseminator of knowledge. This does not mean that the role of the teacher will become less important, but rather more so. In presenting a suggested time allocation chart, we have set aside a large amount of time for tutorials. These tutorials could include the teacher instructing a small number of students. A tutorial need not necessarily take a whole period: 2 or 3 mini-tutorials may be used from time to time. But the length of the tutorial should be adjusted to the needs of the student. In order to conduct this sort of advisory work, teachers will have to think of a classroom involving many activities being performed simultaneously. Some students may be in the library, others may be working on various activities involved with a film they have been observing, others may be writing up part of their journal.

Presuming that the class is working satisfactorily, it may be helpful to understand the role of the teacher/tutor in relation to the students'
portfolio work. There is a thin line here between advising students about their written work and interfering with it. Interfering with students' work will not help a student to grow in knowledge or understanding of the subject. Advising students is a totally different matter. Teachers should treat students' work sensitively. There should be no such thing as correction or marking of written work as such. Teachers should help students to recognise areas of weakness in their work and make revisions accordingly. When they give advice and suggestion, the criteria that teachers can apply are:

1. clear, accurate and appropriate use of English,
2. consistent overall presentation,
3. originality,
4. research and understanding of background material,
5. evidence of knowledge of the chosen topic and how the written work relates to it, and
6. ability to handle the appropriate written form.

Graphic Work

Candidates may or may not include graphic work in their portfolio. This very much depends on the approach that the student is taking to his/her particular project. Candidates should not be penalised for not submitting graphic work, but high quality written work accompanied by talented graphic work should be given recognition. However, a good written portfolio is what students should mainly be aiming for.

Originality

Original work conforming to the requirements of the criteria should be rewarded. Teachers must remain alert that, in the quest for academic success, originality is not stifled. Teachers must listen to students' ideas and allow them to experiment if they wish. Teachers may wish to explain to the students a variety of options that are open to them if they wish to experiment without swaying them in any particular direction.

Word Limit

The word limit does not imply that there should be limits put on the students' writing. A candidate may grow to enjoy writing a daily journal and wish to submit excerpts from earlier or later parts of the whole.
Teachers should not feel under any constraint to stop students from continuing to write because they have reached the word limit. However students who submit a longer piece of work should have no advantage over those who submit the required number of words.

7.4 Assessment of the study of prescribed texts and literary appreciation

Assessment of the study of prescribed texts and literary appreciation should cover the following:

- **Knowledge** of the background and content of literary texts as well as literary techniques employed by the writer
- **Awareness** of the relationship between topics of chosen literary significance to issues of importance in contemporary culture
- **Judgment** through development of critical skills and analytical skills
- **Expression** ability to write clear, succinct answers.

Essays should be relevant and note connections, relationships and complexities, showing a full command of the question. There should be a full discussion, comparing content and form to demonstrate an appreciation of literary style. The structure should be developed, focused and balanced.

In the assessment of the appreciation of unseen passages of prose and verse, the teacher is looking for an essay which is fully relevant to the question, noting connections, complexities and relationships. Students should attempt to discuss the question at hand with excellent knowledge of the texts. The structure should be developed, focused, balanced and incisive.
NOTES ON TEACHING THE JOURNAL

Some guidance for teachers

The journal is a means for students to show that what they have learned can be integrated into their lives and help them to develop as individuals. There are no definite guidelines to journal writing because personal response and personal development express themselves in different ways with different people, and flexibility must be retained to allow for this. There is no such thing as a model journal; each separate journal reflects that individual person.

Journal entries should be fairly regular and dated. These entries are also where one records meditations, stores ideas and flashes of insight, and comments on what one has read and seen.

The following are some suggestions as to the sort of things the journal might contain:

1. criticism of books, stories, magazine articles, TV programmes, films, etc. that the student comes across. It is best if the themes coincide with the material studied by the student. Common sense should be exercised. "Today I saw 'Total Recall'. It's very interesting," is weak; a four page critical discussion would be out of place. A short summary plus some intelligent criticism of message and content would be desirable. Students should show that the course has heightened their awareness, and their comments should be an improvement on the sort of response they might have given before doing the course.

2. reaction to items in the news that relate to the topic chosen for the course, e.g. Cambodia still has not sorted out its problem, many women around the world are still leading repressed lives and crime hits the headlines frequently.

3. comments on the course, its merits and demerits and its effects on the student's thinking. Students' reflections on the precise ways in which their understanding of the chosen topic has broadened and deepened, and how all this may have set off changes in their
personal visions, values, etc.

4. reflections on the ideas raised by the course, texts and films, e.g. the nature of popular culture, our love-hate relationship with technology, the causes of crime, science and religion, the nature of war.

5. ideas for stories, films, poems; creative reactions to the course.

6. personal explorations, relating one's own fears, pleasures, emotions and relationships to the content of the texts and films encountered.

7. accounts of special visits (the Space Museum, Legco, the Police Museum, etc.) made to improve one's knowledge of the topic.

8. thoughts on film, Hollywood, the social role of the cinema in Hong Kong, the impact of videos, censorship, effects on the young, etc.

9. a record of the development of the project with its false starts, teething problems and triumphs.

**Pointers for students**

1. write continuous prose
2. be concise in their choice of words and expressions
3. come to the point quickly
4. focus on 1 or 2 specific points/responses/questions/problems in each entry only
5. use the skills they learned in the course to read/reassess the visual images bombarding them every day
6. demonstrate how they can apply critical insights acquired through the course to their perception of the medium and the message
7. make sure any sketches are relevant to the point being made
8. be on the lookout for relationship/contradictions between what they are studying in the course and the world around them.
NOTES ON WRITING FILM REVIEWS

One of the first problems of the review form is length: reviews are usually about 1,000 words, and the reviewer has to find ways of saying interesting things within the limitations of this word length. The review should be an effective, self-sufficient piece of writing. It has to be readable as well as informative. Try and grab your reader’s attention with the first sentence or paragraph: remember that reviews must compete for their reader’s attention.

The major trap to avoid is retelling the story of the film under review. Reviews are designed to promote interest in films, and to offer some guidance to potential consumers: e.g. "This is good: go and see it," or "This is not good, don’t bother with it," or - a more complex example, "This is not quite successful, but you might want to see it for the following reasons." You should also consider that some people read reviews of things they have seen or read because they would like to think further about the film or book, or compare their reactions with those of others. A good review should speak to those who haven’t, and those who have, seen what is being reviewed.

While avoid retelling the story, students will have to write enough about it to be able to discuss the film in some detail. An unwritten rule of reviews states that the reviewer must never give away the ending (like all rules, this can occasionally be broken, but it is a good rule to observe). This sort of description should be concerned with how the story is told as much as with what is told. In dealing with the ‘how’ you are writing about the technique, and helping to develop your reader’s sense of how films work, which is an important part of reviewing. You are also showing an awareness of the differences between different media: for instance, the difference between films and books. Poor reviews can often leave the reader wondering whether they are discussing a film or a book because they don’t deal with technique in any way.

To make a review interesting, the reviewer will need to explain, or argue about, why the reader might find the film under discussion interesting, or good or bad. An interesting film may not necessarily be a very good film: it may not succeed in everything it tries to do, but it may still be attempting something interesting. Or its failure may raise interesting points about a
subject, or about movie trends. For instance, what is it that distinguishes big box office successes (e.g. a Stephen Chiao *mo lei tau* comedy) from less successful films in the same genre? Why do genres, especially in Hong Kong cinema, come and go so rapidly?

The main point here is that a student doesn’t have to like a film to review it in interesting ways, and that there is more to say about any film than whether it is good or bad. The student can make a review interesting by what he or she brings to the discussion: putting a film in its generic or social context, discussing its implications for sexual politics, images of women, etc.

Finish strongly: don’t simply repeat the introduction. Think about a punchy ending, one to send your reader to the cinema or video store.
Appendix III

SHAKESPEARE OUR CONTEMPORARY

A sixteenth century male writing verse dramas about aristocratic life might not, on the face of it, have much of relevance to offer a late twentieth century Chinese (female) teenager living in Hong Kong. However, a lot can be learnt as long as this problem is faced directly, and students are encouraged to explore the differences and similarities between Shakespeare's world and their own.

All of us are consumers of modern culture. We read books, newspapers and a wide variety of magazines; we listen to music and watch music videos; we watch television programmes and films; we play video games; we are exposed to an enormous amount of advertising; we are influenced by fashion, and some even read poetry. Students should be encouraged to relate what they find in Shakespeare to modern culture.

References to modern culture need to be explicit, e.g. a TV programme's name needs to be given accurately and in full; a product name needs to be given when discussing an advertisement; a song’s lyrics need to be actually quoted. Naturally, sometimes the students will have to translate such information from Chinese to English.

The sort of connections that students might make are as follows:
- the problems of political succession discussed in various of Shakespeare's plays have their parallels in the modern world.
- the ruling class of Renaissance Europe, a military aristocracy, has been replaced in most countries by bureaucrats and businessmen
- methods of finding a mate vary greatly ranging from computer dating to individual romance and arranged marriages
- the acceptability of divorce has changed attitudes to marriage in many societies
- new villains, often connected with science, have emerged in our time
- sexual issues are handled much more openly in some cultures

The study of Shakespeare can thus be used as a catalyst to help students explore their own lives, attitudes and culture.