



# ENGLISH PERSONAL STATEMENT

DUKES EDUCATION

Fundamentally it is our mastery of language that distinguishes us as human beings and, in my view English Literature is the study of what it is to be human, viewed from the imaginative perspectives of uniquely talented artists through the ages. Descartes once said that the reading of all good books is like a conversation with the finest men of past centuries, a view with which I wholeheartedly agree. It is this unique 'conversation,' combined with my fascination with the way writers can manipulate language so subtly, yet to such powerful effect, that has fuelled my appreciation of Literature.

However, I also love studying History and Philosophy and I fervently believe that no one subject can truly be understood in isolation. Most significantly, History has enabled me to understand the historical context of works of literature in depth, which is so crucial in achieving real insight. The study of Philosophy has encouraged me to approach texts without preconceptions, but it has also helped me to develop sophisticated and discriminating responses both to literature and issues in the real world. In addition, both subjects have sharpened my analytical skills and critical faculties and enhanced my objectivity. My background as a student at a European School, including yearly extended exchanges abroad, as well as my Italian heritage, has made me aware that 'English' Literature did not develop in isolation and it is vital to be aware of our European and world cultural heritage and its influence on the Literature of these Islands. I have always read voraciously, and the portrayal of women has become especially interesting to me. Chaucer's 'The Wife of Bath's Tale' and 'The Millers Tale', 'Vanity Fair', and Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale', all lie close to my heart; yet they also allow me to trace the ways in which women, although at times sexually objectified and dominated, can find ways to subvert this stereotype to ultimately become the powerful sex.

I also enjoy comparing the techniques and ideas of writers working in different periods and genres, such as the contrasting sound patterns and diction used within 'The Great Gatsby,' Shakespeare's 'Sonnets' and Browning's 'Up at a Villa Down in the City.' I hold strong views on many ethical and political issues and am a particularly keen debater, both within and outside my A-level courses. I am a member of the Historical and Political Association and the Philosophy Society; most recently I have opposed the notion that: Women should never have been given the vote. Such activities improve my ability to argue coherently and with confidence. I appreciate the chance to speak on topics about which I am passionate; for example, the tension between the concepts of rehabilitation and punishment, my understanding of which has been greatly increased since my reading of 'Our Country's Good'.

My enjoyment of literature has been furthered by a lifetime of dedication to performing, watching and directing Theatre. I am a committed member of Youth Music Theatre UK, Stage Right Youth Theatre and Old Court Theatre. My participation in these groups has enabled me to explore and perform dramatic texts such as 'Midsummer Night's Dream', 'Restoration' and currently 'The Importance of being Earnest', in addition to a number of plays that I have scripted both alone and collaboratively. 'From The Other Side', one of the latter, was inspired by my perception of the cycles of action and reaction in history, and particularly by my reading of War Poetry. I relish the opportunity to enjoy and evaluate dramatic texts in the way that the author intended. However, I maintain my zest for other forms of literature, as well as gaining insight into a variety of critical literary views other than my own, through being part of a discussion-based 'book club'. I look forward to meeting people at University who will continue to challenge me; I believe that I have a great deal to contribute to University life and I am eager to do so.

**Commented [u1]:** Personal opinion – shows independent engagement with ideas.

**Commented [u2]:** Perhaps it would have worked better here to use an actual quotation – but it's important to balance your use of quotations with a view of the statement as a whole.

**Commented [u3]:** When reading this back I feel it sounds needlessly wordy – I think I felt the need to use complex sentence structures and vocabulary which would demonstrate my grasp of English. I could have varied sentence length a little more – though this can be tricky when trying to fit everything in!

**Commented [u4]:** I think I would cut this 'however' now

**Commented [u5]:** I think this word is overused and if I was re-doing this I'd find a better way to phrase this.

**Commented [u6]:** This is good as it indicates an interest in English language; if I was to re-write this I would make this more explicit by rephrasing to: 'English' language did not develop in isolation...'

**Commented [u7]:** Perhaps, in retrospect, this topic was a little too obvious a choice

**Commented [u8]:** Good to reference personal, specific interest as it clearly indicates outside-school focused study.

**Commented [u9]:** Good, wide reference of texts both in terms of genre - poetry and novels and also in terms of period. Also demonstrates ability to think laterally and make connections between varying periods and forms.

**Commented [u10]:** This came up in my interview. I found making such specific points made for focused, interesting starting points for questions in my interview.

**Commented [u11]:** Good pithy sentence

**Commented [u12]:** Useful to reference the collaborative nature as it indicates I can work well with others.

**Commented [u13]:** Useful to bring my references to extra curricular back to my love of, and engagement with, literature.

**Commented [u14]:** As before, I would cut this 'however' too. I think this brings an unnecessary negative note to the statement and would save on the word count too!

**Commented [u15]:** I think this is a good, positive and close to the statement which balances well the need to come across as someone the tutors would want in their tutorials as well as someone who does, and will, work hard.