



**University Learning in Schools**

# **English Literature**

**Stories of the Great North  
Road: Rogues, Riders and  
Runaways**

**Module Rationale**



The **Brilliant** Club



**Lampton School**  
a DfE Outstanding Academy & Teaching School

SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**



Department  
for Education



## University Learning in Schools

### Module Rationale

**Title of Module: Stories of the Great North Road: Rogues, Riders and Runaways**

**Teacher/researcher pair: Peter Jones and Madeleine St Amour**

### Module Rationale

Why did you chose your particular theme (consider: **inspiration, ambition, creativity, new ways of thinking, pragmatism, tailoring research to exam requirements**)?

We were interested in introducing pupils to roguish fictions because these stories would provide an alternative (more exciting) route into Victorian novels, which can often be thought of as dry and prudish. This course will show that the Victorians were fascinated by tales of abandonment, adventure and romance that played out of the Great North Road.

The two forks of the Great North Road (which roughly follow the routes of the A1 and the A10) run either side of Wood Green where St Thomas More School is located. Their channels then converge and continue all the way to Edinburgh. This course is aimed at allowing pupils to develop

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|   | <p>new ways of enriching the history of their local area. The historical and mythic geographies of the GNR are regionally embedded, but they will also speak to broader learning objectives because like Dick Turpin’s journey in Ainsworth’s <i>Rookwood</i>, they encompass inner London and many parts of the British mainland (Edmonton, Ware, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, York etc.)</p>  |
| <p>What did you hope to achieve? (i.e. what was your over-arching objective?)</p> | <p>This programme will show how stories of the road that featured highwayman, outcasts and outlaws have been told for centuries and also that the Victorians had an uneasy attraction to these popular folk tales. Pupils will develop the ability to analyze challenging texts and grapple with concepts of ‘genre’ development by analyzing ballads, folk tales, ‘Newgate’ fiction, criminal biographies, realism, and romance.</p> <p>Analysis of texts by Charles Dickens, Thomas De Quincey, William Harrison Ainsworth and Thomas Hardy, will equip pupils with the critical apparatus which will enable them to develop their knowledge in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To place texts within the distinctive historical conditions of a nineteenth-century British social landscape that was becoming more mobile and ‘footloose’ in the wake of industrialization. Many rural migrants left their parishes and took to highways like the Great North</li> </ul> |

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|   | <p>Road, but they didn't always find work when they reached London (<i>Oliver Twist</i> for example)!</p> <p>b) To explore the <i>intertextuality</i> of Victorian novels that invest in the roguish narratives of the past. But to emphasize that writers took risks when they borrowed from stories of popular</p> <p>c) criminals and scoundrels of the past. The <i>critical reception</i> of their books might be negative. Novels could be rejected because their controversial subject matter offended the morals, tastes and sensibilities of Victorian readers.</p> |
| <p>How did you decide on the time frame for your module? (To fit to a half-term? To fit with an assessment cycle? Based module on x number of lessons of y length over z number of weeks)</p> | <p>We decided to fit the scheme of work into a whole half-term of teaching as we felt that would enable pupils to get a well rounded understanding of the topic and analyse the phenomenon of Highwaymen from different angles – literature, historical context and travel. Studying in this way also enabled more deep-learning of the reading, writing and speaking and listening skills that underpinned the module.</p> <p>This was based on five lessons a week for four weeks with a two hour assessment at the end.</p>   |

**Overview of Module**

What are the components?

Lesson plans/rationale

There are twenty full lesson plans for this module. These can be taught as a whole half-term's worth of learning or could be split into three distinct topics if a shorter time frame is required:

**Study of the Highwayman ballad: Lessons 1-8**

By focusing on the genre of the Highwayman ballad, these lessons will equip pupils with the ability to closely analyse both seen and unseen pre-19<sup>th</sup> century texts. This is an important aspect of the new GCSE English Language and Literature exam and this unit can provide year 9 pupils with a bridge to the skills and knowledge required for GCSE.

Pupils will learn the conventions of ballad writing and develop an ability to identify features of language, structure and form. They will develop abilities to closely analyse writer's techniques and evaluate the stylistic choices that writer's make.

By focusing on ballads, pupils will become more familiar with pre-19<sup>th</sup> Century language and gain an understanding of the social and historical context of Highwaymen.

After studying the form of the ballad, pupils will apply the conventions of ballad writing to their own original work. This will develop their writing skills – applying language and structural features in order to effect their audience. The performance aspect of ballad writing will develop pupil’s speaking and listening skills.

**Literature of travel: Lessons 8-15**

These lessons build on the previous lessons but provide a greater variety of extracts to study. Including three extracts from pre-19<sup>th</sup> Century novels focusing on descriptions of travel. Works used include Hardy, Dickens and De Quincey, providing pupils with challenging texts from the literature cannon.

These lessons will stretch and challenge more able pupils and develop critical analysis of texts. Pupils will closely analyse how writers create tension. This more advanced focus on structure is in response to the greater emphasis that the new GCSEs place on structure and closely analyzing unseen extracts from pre-19<sup>th</sup> Century literature.

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|   | <p><b>History of Crime and Punishment: 16-19</b><br/>                 These lessons provide pupils with a more in-depth focus on the social and historical context of the texts that have been studied, particularly in the first 8 lessons. Pupils will learn about the punishment of criminals in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and learn how a whole genre of literature was influenced by Newgate Prison. This builds on the research of Dr Peter Jones and will provide pupils with a more academic insight into the background of 18<sup>th</sup> century literature.</p> |
| <p>Presentations</p>  | <p>The lesson plans aim to provide teachers with a basis upon which they can create their own powerpoint presentations if they wish to do so.</p>   |
| <p>Resources required for pupils (books, lab equipment, computer facilities, etc.)</p>          | <p>Book of extracts and resources.</p>  |
| <p>Resources provided in lessons by teacher (text extracts, images, journal articles, etc.)</p> |   |

| <b>Unit overview</b><br>Individual Lesson Objectives, Key Questions and Key Concepts & Terminology |                  |                        |                                       |
|--|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Lesson</b>  | <b>Objective</b> | <b>Key Question(s)</b> | <b>Key Concepts &amp; Terminology</b> |
| 1  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 2  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 3  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 4  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 5  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 6  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 7  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 8  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 9  |                  |                        |                                       |
| 10   |                  |                        |                                       |

**Evaluation**

*What is the impact of the module? Consider the impact, if any, that planning, teaching and assessing the module has made on both **pupil** and **teacher** in each category:*

| Impact                 | On pupil  | On teacher   |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Subject skills learned | <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify and analyse features of language, structure and form</li> <li>• An understanding of the contexts of production in which a text is written</li> <li>• Understanding of the contexts of reception of a range of texts</li> <li>• How writers are inspired by their social and historical contexts</li> <li>• Conventions of genre: ballads, Newgate literature and adventure literature</li> <li>• Developing skills of analysis</li> <li>• Developing and sustaining critical responses to texts</li> </ul> | <p>I have learned about a genre of literature that I had never engaged with – highwaymen ballads and Newgate literature. This has improved my subject knowledge and inspired me to think more creatively about the resources I use in lessons.</p> <p>I have become more familiar with pre-19<sup>th</sup> Century texts, an important aspect of the new GCSE, which has proved very helpful to me.</p> <p>Thinking more critically about the contexts of production and reception of texts has enabled me to evaluate literature in a more critical manner.</p> <p>Working with Peter has inspired me to think of more creative approaches to the study of English and it has made me seek more challenging texts for my gifted and talented pupils to work with.</p> |

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|  | <p><b>Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing more ambitious and interesting vocabulary</li><li>• Choosing language carefully to impact reader</li><li>• Applying language and structural features when writing creatively</li><li>• How to craft a ballad</li><li>• Applying conventions of form</li><li>• Developing a narrative</li><li>• Improving skills of characterisation</li></ul> <p><b>Speaking and Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building skills of oracy</li><li>• Speaking to impact an audience</li><li>• Speaking for purpose</li><li>• Evaluating other's ideas and effectiveness</li></ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding the unique historical contexts in which crime literature is produced</li><li>• Understanding contentions of genre</li></ul> |  |
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|   | <p>Overall this module has provided a top-set with the stretch and challenge needed to bridge from KS3 to KS4. Pupils have become confident and able pupils of literature and have been inspired in their reading, writing and speaking and listening.</p>   |  |
| <p>New conceptual understanding or new ways of thinking</p> | <p>Pupils have grown in confidence in terms of their abilities to approach challenging texts. They have enjoyed learning new and interesting vocabulary and the difficult language of the texts have helped to improve pupils' abilities to make inferences.</p> <p>They have become more critical and do not take things at face value so much. For example, comparing the romantic presentation of Highwaymen as presented in ballads with contemporary news reports and historical accounts, has led pupils to think more carefully about what they read and the bias that might be inherent.</p> |  |

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|  | <p>Pupils have really enjoyed approaching such a unique topic and really enjoyed the speaking and listening elements.</p> <p>They have undertaken their own research and improved their abilities to research historical topics online.</p> |  |
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| Reflection   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Stop   | Start   | Carry on  |
| What should be excised or not repeated?  | What should teachers add to the module next time it is taught?  | What aspects worked well and should definitely be repeated next time the module is taught?  |
| Some lessons, such as those analysing lengthy extracts (Dickens, Hardy) require more than one lesson to fully understand the texts and deconstruct writer's methods. | <p>It would be good to find some clips of actors reading and performing ballads to bring the performance aspect to life.</p> <p>More opportunities for pupils to write – perhaps writing their own Highwayman story.</p> <p>Re-visit highwaymen/ women characters throughout the module to provide more inspiration for creative writing.</p> | <p>Providing pupils with their own Highwayman/ woman from history provided a great hook for pupils to engage with.</p> <p>The top-trumps activity was resource heavy but provided great fun for the pupils.</p> <p>Really develop pupils ability to deconstruct difficult texts – until the use of PEARL (point, evidence, analysis, reader response, link to question) to improve essay writing.</p> <p>Ballad writing – I was amazed at the creativity of my pupils and their abilities to craft poetry. I repeated this more times than in the module to provide more chances for pupils to develop their poetic voices.</p> |