**English A1:**

**A Global Perspective**

*As an IB World School, Henrico HS embraces a global perspective that is more than flags, food, and festivals. Each subject area has created its own Global Perspective Statement in order to raise awareness of how internationalism permeates all that we do in the classroom.*

**Global issues in English A1** are reflected in the literature we study. Because most works of literature include characters who serve, de facto, as models of how humans behave in all their incarnations, ranging from good to evil, strong to weak, wise to foolish, and heroic to tragic, the study of literature necessarily fosters a respect for individual differences, an interest in social justice, and the ability to identify, understand, and appreciate different values and perceptions. In studying models of human behavior, we necessarily learn what constitutes effective behavior and what constitutes failure—as *homo sapiens,* rather than simply as citizens of a particular nation or a particular age.

**Global thinking in English A1:** Day-to-day practice in the English A1 classroom requires that students develop skills that foster global thinking. Literature seminars, peer revision activities, group projects and presentations foster cooperation, respect for diversity, interdependency, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Through discussing literature, writing essays, and making oral presentations, students develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Many of the IB assessments require that students demonstrate an ability to develop a perspective and defend it through reasoned persuasion. English A1 students also develop their technology skills through a wide range of activities involving a wide range of technologies ranging from personal technologies (such as e-mail or bulletin boards) to presentation technologies (such as PowerPoint or MovieMaker) to international technologies (such as the interactive Shakespeare project from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-Upon-Avon.)

The content of the literature studied in English A1 further promotes global thinking. Students read works such as *Night, “Master Harold”…and the boys, Cyrano de Bergerac, Candide,* and *A Doll’s House,* all of which raise issues of concern to the global community, such as universal human rights, family dynamics, and education.

**English A1 in the global community:** Storytelling is a universal human behavior. Through storytelling, cultures document what they have observed of human behavior and what they have learned about which of that behavior should or should not be repeated by people of other times or other places. Because the IB Language A1 curriculum requires that students study works from different centuries, different geographic regions around the world, and different genres, the Language A1 student is exposed to a wide range of viewpoints. This curriculum provides students with the opportunity to learn to recognize universal attitudes, feelings, and experiences. It also offers students the opportunity to learn about real differences among viewpoints, and it gives them a starting place for determining for themselves ways in which differences might be respected, accepted, and overcome.

**Global practice of ethics as reflected in English A1:** One of the primary objectives of literature study is the identification of what makes a hero. That study entails a consideration of people who fail to rise to the level of heroism, be they evil or be they cowardly. In considering the models of heroicism in literature, students begin to develop a personal understanding of what beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors an upstanding citizen and human being exhibits, and they learn to value those characteristics. The study of English A1 also requires that students engage in ethical behavior themselves; the expression of complex ideas verbally or in writing often includes the reference to the ideas of others, and the IB has set a high standard for the ethical acknowledgement of sources so that students learn to respect and value intellectual property and to behave in such a way as to give credit where credit is due.

**Teaching and learning from different perspectives in in English A1:** Students in English A1 must deal with different perspectives both in the content of the course and in the assignments they complete.The literature that we read incorporates different perspectives within them, so that the literature itself demands that students learn from different perspectives. *The Merchant of Venice,* for example, gives us the question of Shylock’s motives from his perspective, from Portia’s, and from Antonio’s. *The Great Gatsby* gives asks students to consider the title character from the perspective of the narrator, Daisy Buchanan, and Tom Buchanan, which ultimately raises the question of what the author’s perspective is, and, finally, what the reader’s perspective is.

Several types of assignments require students to consciously consider differing viewpoints. As we read *The Odyssey*, for example,students suggest Learner Profile traits that Odysseus shows and some that he does not show. After reading *The Hiding Place* students discuss the challenges of upholding values such as honesty amidst human oppression: Is it acceptable to lie in order to save human life? While reading *Romeo and Juliet* students provide different thoughts about whether the romantic relationship shows love or infatuation. All seminars require that the class as a whole consider multiple perspectives, because all students’ listen to ideas from every student on what elements of a given text are important as well as how they might be interpreted. The IB assessments that require comparison/contrast (such as IB Exam Paper 2) demand, in a formalized way, that students identify a single issue that is treated from two different perspectives.

**The search for identity in English A1:** The study of literature is the study of identity through culture. Every time students read a work from their own culture, they have the opportunity to consider whether the culture as depicted in that work fits their personal values and beliefs, or whether the values and beliefs of the work are outmoded or in conflict with the students’ own moral system. Even the study of works from another culture or time period can contribute to a student’s greater understanding of his or her own identity by providing an opportunity for comparison and contrast. The act of writing, furthermore, is an act that requires the discovery and development of one’s own identity. The development of an authorial voice, an integral part of the writing act, is the development of an individual perspective of and response to the world, including literature.

**Global action in English A1:** Students in English A1 develop the tools needed for global action when they develop their ability to communicate in writing, verbally, and by using technology. They develop an understanding of the need for global action when they study texts that focus on global issues. Many works of literature raise questions of human rights and abuses; some, such as *The Kite Runner,* inspire direct action by inviting students to engage in current ongoing efforts to solve global problems through fundraising or other civic activities.