

Studying English at IB Diploma level

The IB English Diploma programme is a rigorous and challenging course which requires you to use the English language in a complex academic context. In both **IB Language A: Literature** and **Language A: Language & Literature** at Standard and Higher levels, you will study literary and non-literary texts and works to develop an understanding of how form, content, purpose, audience, and context shape meaning.

How this resource can help you

Navigating through the IB Diploma programme involves a substantial amount of time for independent study and you may need additional support from your teacher, friends, or other resources. Of course, your teacher and friends may not always be available, particularly when it comes to acquiring, learning, and using the academic language of the course.

This A-Z glossary aims to help you in this process by unpacking the language of the IB Diploma English courses, with a focus on both course content and assessment.

- In this A-Z glossary, you will find key vocabulary, such as literary terms, linguistic concepts, subject-specific command words, and assessment terminology that will have a significant impact on your overall achievement and final score.
- Each word or phrase included in this A-Z glossary has been carefully selected because we think it will be useful in your studies. This resource contains words and phrases from the IB Diploma English subject guides for both courses as well as subject-specific terms commonly found in most English textbooks.
- Do remember that this resource is **not** a dictionary, as it does not contain all possible definitions for each entry. It is, however, a glossary of terms where the definitions are given in the context of the IB Diploma English Literature and Language & Literature courses.
- For the most part, the terms in this glossary are relevant to both courses, whereas others are more course-specific. This is often indicated in the definitions or the examples provided, but you must also identify how these terms are useful to you in your own course.
- Also note this is **not** a comprehensive list of terms. If your teacher gives you some additional words, you might choose to write them into the glossary yourself, so that the book is more like a living workbook for you.
- Your teacher might also encourage you to extend the current list with additional terms, enhance the definitions according to their own ideas and interpretations, or provide alternative examples derived from the works you are studying.
- The literary examples we have used come from the prescribed reading list issued by the IB0. Other examples have been selected because they relate to the IB Diploma students' own experiences, ranging from how you approach essay writing to your preparation for oral presentations, or your possible questions about the assessment components of the course.
- Where you see a word in the definition which is written in **blue text**, this means that a glossed definition exists for it elsewhere in the book. This has been done where we thought it would be helpful for you.

A

Absolute phrase	<p>A phrase that modifies a noun and is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.</p> <p><i>Pen in hand, the student started to plan his Paper 1 essay.</i></p> <p>(see phrase)</p>
Absurdism	<p>An early 20th-century philosophy that considered humans were unable to find real value in a meaningless and irrational world. In literature, especially in the theatre of the absurd, this is shown through characters who question the meaning of existence and fail to discover a sense of purpose. For example, the protagonists' questioning of the world in Samuel Beckett's <i>Waiting for Godot</i>.</p> <p>(see existentialism, nihilism)</p>
Academic essay	<p>A formal essay written in argument form and based on carefully conducted research, as in your Extended Essay or the HL Essay.</p>
Academic honesty	<p>All essays or oral presentations for your IB Diploma must be created entirely by yourself. You must not cheat or 'steal' information or ideas or be helped by other people. Nor can you copy information from another person or organization without clearly stating its source, ie where you got the text or ideas from. All your own work has to be just that. Your own. Even if you think someone else's work is very good and you are complimenting that person by using it yourself, or you made the mistake of 'cutting and pasting' from a website and have forgotten the source, it is not allowed. Academic honesty is very important to your IB studies, and is required by universities, too.</p> <p>(see plagiarism)</p>
Accent	<p>The way we pronounce words when we speak. This might change depending on where we learn to speak a language or who we learn from and how they pronounce a language. You are not penalized for your accent when delivering an oral presentation. Your use of language is only assessed against the descriptors on the language criterion.</p>
Accented	<p>The way in which someone speaks.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Language may be spoken with a strong accent, so we describe it as accented. For example, a student whose first language is Arabic may speak good English but in a heavily accented way. 2 Emphasis or stress placed on a particular syllable or word, as part of a poem or in a play, for example in <i>Othello</i> by William Shakespeare: <i>'Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors / My very noble and approved good masters.'</i> (Act 1, Scene 3)
Account	<p>Also known as a report, this is someone's description and narration of events as they happened. It can be a personal account, where the speaker either witnessed or participated in the events described.</p>
Accountability (accountable)	<p>Being responsible for something. In IB Diploma English, being accountable means that it is your responsibility to formulate a clear plan for meeting the expectations of all the assessment components and reading all the required texts and works. You are also responsible for following the principles of academic honesty throughout the course.</p>
Accuracy (accurate)	<p>Without errors, correct. For example, in relation to how you express yourself and apply grammatical rules correctly to your spoken and written English. You will be assessed on your accuracy under the language criterion across all assessments in the course. What this means is that your language has to be precise and you must demonstrate a strong command of literary terminology.</p>

Achieve (achievement, achieves)	To reach an objective or a level of success through your hard work or your talents. When you are assessed in IB Diploma, level descriptors focus on positive achievement; you are given marks for what you show you can do, rather than have marks taken away for what you fail to show.
Acronym	A 'word' or an abbreviation made up of the initials or first letters of a set of words, and which can be pronounced as a whole word, for example, UNESCO. Compare this with BBC (an initialism) or with CAS (an acronym).
Act	A part of a play, sometimes consisting of two or more scenes .
Action	The main events in a story, play, or film that might be significant, interesting, or exciting.
Active reading	A way of reading which usually takes more time. We look to engage with the text, and critically ask questions of what we read, so that we can shape our own opinion about the author's work and the content.
Active voice	A verb form where the subject performs the action depicted by the verb. For example, <i>the teacher marks the essay</i> , is written in the active voice. (see passive voice)
Adage	A saying that contains a universal truth about the nature of life, the human condition, etc. For example, from <i>Twelfth Night</i> by William Shakespeare: <i>'Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.'</i>
Adapt (adapts, adapting, adapted)	To change or make adjustments in line with a different situation or conditions.
Adaptation	The alteration of a text or a story to fit another situation or media. <i>The play was an adaptation of a novel written many years ago.</i>
Address	A formal speech delivered on a special occasion, such as an inaugural address delivered by the newly elected president of a country.
Adequate (adequately)	Just enough, but not a lot or too much. In a similar way, in British English, some people say 'It's OK', meaning 'It's not great, but it will be adequate'. If your work is 'adequately organized', it's of a satisfactory quality, but it's not brilliant to achieve top marks. You've made it acceptable, but you've not exceeded expectations either.
Adhere	To stick to or follow something very closely. In both Literature and Language & Literature, as part of your exploration of intertextuality , you will be asked to consider how a text adheres to or deviates from the norms. For example, you may look at how <i>Persepolis</i> by Marjane Satrapi adheres to the norms of the graphic novel .
Adjective	A word which describes a person, place, or thing, for example, <i>clever, green, or difficult</i> .
Adverb	A descriptive word which gives more information about a verb or adjective , for example, <i>rapidly, kindly, or diligently</i> . In English, we often add <i>-ly</i> to the end of an adjective to make an adverb.
Advertisement	A type of text that persuades the audience to purchase a product, hire a service, adopt a certain attitude, etc.
Advertising campaign	A series of advertisements that promote the same product, service, or idea during a specific period of time. Language & Literature students may choose an advertising campaign for their Individual Oral .

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Advertising copy	The text that provides a description or additional information about a product or service being advertised. It is not the same as the slogan , which is a catchy, memorable phrase to be associated with the product and the brand.
Aesthetic	Relates to beauty or artistic quality. When we talk about the aesthetic quality or merit of a text, we are referring to those elements which give it stylistic characteristics, and how these impact on the reader and create meaning.
Affect	As a verb, to have an effect on something or someone. <i>The lack of preparation could <u>affect</u> your grade.</i>
Affixation	The process of adding a prefix or a suffix to a root word. For example, the affixation of the word <i>prematurely</i> consists of the prefix <i>pre-</i> and the suffix <i>-ly</i> .
Alienation (alienated)	A feeling of estrangement and isolation. Sometimes literature portrays characters who are alienated from their society, such as George in <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> by Edward Albee.
Allegory	A story or poem which has been given a series of symbols by the author to represent or hide a political, spiritual, or moral meaning. The symbols which may be characters or events in the story make sense on one level but they also have a second or 'hidden' meaning. A famous allegory is Arthur Miller's play <i>The Crucible</i> , where he uses the Salem witch trials as a metaphor for the McCarthy era.
Alliteration	When an author places several words in the same sentence which all start with the same sound or letter. <i>The IB Diploma <u>d</u>oesn't <u>d</u>eter <u>d</u>etermined <u>d</u>udes.</i>
Allusion	A frequently used literary or rhetorical device where a direct or indirect reference is made to a well-known point in history, story, author, literary text, or film, etc. There are several types of allusions, such as literary, historical, religious, mythological, or cinematic.
Ambiguity (ambiguous)	When there is more than one meaning to a word or phrase, or it can be interpreted in different ways. In a legal text, for example, this may lead to unwanted confusion; but in literature, an author may deliberately create ambiguity to allow readers to use their own ideas and judgment to interpret the work.
Ambivalence	The state of being uncertain or having opposing feelings regarding a topic, event, or a person.
Amplification	Adding more information in a sentence or in a paragraph to emphasize a point. For example, in <i>The Things They Carried</i> , Tim O'Brien uses amplification to depict the emotional and physical burdens of war: <i>'Often, they carried each other, the wounded or weak. They carried infections. They carried chess sets, basketballs, Vietnamese-English dictionaries, insignia of rank...'</i>
Anachronism	When language, an object, or an event is included in a story that belongs in another period of time. If a character uses a mobile phone in a piece of literature from the 1960s, we would say that was an anachronism.
Analogy	Where a writer or speaker makes a comparison between one thing and another in order to help explain something better. Often used as a poetic device, an analogy can sometimes take the form of a simile or a metaphor . In Carol Ann Duffy's <i>Valentine</i> , the speaker offers her loved one an onion, comparing the effect of the onion to the cruelty of love: <i>'Here. / It will blind you with tears / like a lover.'</i>

Analysis (analyse)	The reading and study of a text or work in which we identify the literary techniques used, and how these create meaning. (see list of command terms on page 94)
Analysis and evaluation	As part of your IB Diploma English course, an assessment objective where you are judged on your ability to analyse and evaluate how language and style create meaning, how texts are related, and the ways in which texts offer insight into larger, universal themes.
Analytic markscheme (or mark scheme)	Each exam paper for the IB Diploma is accompanied by its own markscheme. The markscheme provides information on what each question of the exam paper would require in a candidate's response to be given a certain number of marks. The markscheme is drafted by the chief examiner and sets marking standards at the start of each examination session. The markscheme is then shared with other examiners to ensure that marking is consistent and accurate. After the examination session is over, the markscheme becomes available for schools to share with teachers and students and is a useful reference for practising past papers. This helps you understand what you need to provide to obtain as high a mark as you can.
Anaphora	The repetition of a word or phrases at the beginning of successive sentences or lines of poetry or prose. For example, in <i>The Negro Speaks of Rivers</i> by Langston Hughes: <i>'I've known rivers: / I've known rivers ancient as the world...'</i>
Anaphoric reference	When a word refers to a previous idea or word previously stated in the text for its meaning. Here, the anaphoric reference for <i>it</i> is <i>the play</i> : <i>The play challenges the audience's expectations of gender norms as it depicts a rebellious female protagonist.</i>
Anecdote (anecdotal)	A personal account of an event which is intended to be funny or interesting yet might be seen as unreliable or a rumour.
Anglophone	English-speaking parts of the world or cultures, for example, Australia, South Africa, or the US. <i>For the IB Diploma, you will study texts from several parts of the Anglophone world.</i>
Annotate (annotated, annotations)	To add notes to a text which help explain, add clarity, or act as a reminder. The process of annotation is an important skill in the close reading of texts (and is particularly important for Paper 1 and the Individual Oral).
Antagonist	In a literary text, a character who actively opposes or fights with the main hero (or protagonist) which then serves to bring conflict to the story. We might call them 'the villain' or 'the bad guy'. For example, Roger Chillingworth in Nathaniel Hawthorne's <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> .
Anthology	A published collection of literary works (ie poetry , short stories , or essays by different authors) that share the same literary form , theme , or period, such as an anthology of 19th-century poetry.
Anthropomorphism (anthropomorphic)	A type of personification where non-human entities are given human traits, such as speech and human behaviour. For example, the characters in George Orwell's <i>Animal Farm</i> are animals who behave, think, and speak like humans.

A

- Anti-climax** An unexpected, often disappointing ending to a narrative, used as a **textual feature** to create humour or to serve as a warning for the audience. For example, the ending of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* could be considered anti-climactic.
(see **climax**)
- Anti-hero** The **protagonist** or another major character in a narrative who does not demonstrate any heroic traits, such as nobility and bravery. The anti-hero can be self-centered and non-conformist, sometimes a social outcast. For example, Holden Caulfield in J D Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* who lacks a clear sense of purpose and places himself on the margins of society.
- Anti-novel** A novel where the usual **conventions** of the **literary form** and traditions for what we might expect in a novel are deliberately avoided by the author. For example, *Ulysses* by James Joyce.
- Antithesis (plural antitheses)** The exact opposite, where a writer might put contrasting ideas against each other, or use two directly opposing types of language for two different characters for literary effect. In *Disabled*, by Wilfred Owen, the speaker uses an antithesis to contrast the image of the disabled soldier before the war to his current state:
There was an artist silly for his face, / For it was younger than his youth, last year. / Now, he is old; his back will never brace...'
- Apostrophe**
- 1 A punctuation mark which represents ownership or where a letter (or letters) is missing to contract (or shorten) words.
The IB student's determination to succeed. (ownership)
Physics doesn't have to be difficult. (contraction)
 - 2 A figure of speech when the poet is addressing a place, concept, or a person that is imaginary or that isn't directly part of the poem. It can sometimes start with use of 'O...!' or 'Oh...!'. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Macbeth addresses the stars:
'Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires' (Act 1, Scene 4)
- Appeal**
- 1 (verb) To make an earnest request.
The local charities appeal for donations.
 - 2 (noun) As a **text type**, an appeal is a form of advertisement by charities and organizations where they ask the public for financial donations and/or support for their cause.
- Apply** To make use of something you already know in a specific, practical situation. For example, in Literature and Language & Literature **Paper 2**, you must apply your knowledge of the works studied in order to answer the question.
- Appreciation** Having knowledge and understanding of the value of something. For example, in **Paper 1** you must show an appreciation of authorial choices, which means that you have to explore how the author's use of language creates meaning within the text.
- Appropriate** Suitable to a particular situation. For example, to achieve a high mark on the language criterion, you must use language appropriate to the task. This means that language has to be suitable for a discussion of literature.

Archaic	Old or out-of-date; may be used to refer to a word or a language style that we no longer regularly use. Writers use archaic language to evoke a feeling of nostalgia for the past. For example, in <i>Ode to the West Wind</i> by Percy Bysshe Shelley: <i>‘Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams’</i>
Archetype (archetypal)	A typical or perfect example of a type of person or thing. You can have an archetypal character, plot, or symbol. An archetypal character shows universal traits about human nature, such as the protagonist who is the archetypal dreamer in <i>Don Quixote</i> by Miguel de Cervantes. (see stereotype)
Areas of exploration	The syllabus for both Literature and Language & Literature is divided into three main areas of exploration which provide a focus for your course. As you prepare for all your assessment components, you will study a variety of texts and works in each of these areas. The areas of exploration are: 1) Readers, writers, and texts ; 2) Time and space ; and 3) Intertextuality: connecting texts .
Argument	A statement meant to persuade someone of an opinion or a position on a subject. In literary criticism, an argument consists of an interpretation standpoint (or thesis) supported by evidence from the works or the context in which those works were produced.
Arranged	In poetry and other literary forms or text types, how the words are presented or organized on the page and have a relationship with each other for literary effect.
Artful	Characterized by great artistic skill. <i>The artful depiction of the English countryside in Victorian literature.</i>
Article	1 Words that modify a noun. These can be definite articles, as in <i>the argument</i> or <i>the reason</i> , or indefinite articles, as in <i>an argument</i> or <i>a reason</i> . 2 A generic term for a journalistic text. Articles include news reports, opinion columns, editorials, feature articles, etc.
Aside	Used in a play, where a character’s lines are spoken without other characters being able to hear them. This may help the audience understand some information about the storyline or about a part of a character’s personality. An aside is much shorter than a soliloquy – it’s important not to confuse these two terms.
Assertion	A strong statement of a fact or an opinion. For example, one of the Paper 2 questions may contain a statement of this sort and you are asked to discuss the works you have studied <i>in light of this assertion</i> .
Assertive	Confident, determined, and assured.
Assessment criteria	The set of criteria used to mark your IB coursework. They are based on specific skills you must demonstrate and enable teachers and examiners to measure your level of achievement in every assessment component. Each assessment piece has its own assessment criteria.
Assistance	Help or support from someone else to ensure you meet an objective. For example, your teacher will offer some assistance in your preparation of the Individual Oral .
Assonance	Where a writer uses words which have the same vowel sounds next to each other or near to each other. This creates a sound or rhythm to give it a certain mood or make it sound more musical or lively. For example, in <i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i> by William Wordsworth: <i>‘A host, of golden daffodils’</i> (see dissonance ; see consonance)
Assumption	Something considered to be true, without actual proof.

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Asyndeton	<p>A series of words where conjunctions (such as <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>or</i>, <i>for</i>, <i>nor</i>) have been omitted on purpose to create a stronger impact on the audience. For example, in his <i>I Have A Dream</i> speech, Martin Luther King leaves out <i>and</i> when he says:</p> <p><i>'Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities...'</i></p>
Atmosphere	<p>The mood of a particular setting as created in a text. For example, if the setting is depicted as a dark and cold room, we could say that the atmosphere is unpleasant.</p> <p>(see mood)</p>
Attempt	<p>The effort to accomplish something. For example, your work is credited if you make some attempt to meet the requirements of the task, although this would fall under the lower levels of achievement on the assessment criteria.</p>
Attention	<p>A sense of awareness. For example, the language criterion states that attention should be paid to register, which means that you need to show awareness of the language appropriate to the task.</p>
Attitude	<p>A standpoint or perspective on a place, idea, or individual. For example, a writer's attitude towards a character or setting is expressed through his or her tone.</p>
Audience	<p>Every text (either fiction or non-fiction) is produced for a particular audience (that is, the reader, listener, or viewer, etc.). The audience receive and interpret the text based on their own cultural expectations, beliefs, education, or in a broader sense, their context of reception. For example, the controversial ending of Henrik Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> has been received differently by audiences over the past 200 years.</p>
Auditory (or aural) imagery	<p>A type of imagery that evokes sound, noise, etc. For example, in <i>When I Woke</i> by Dylan Thomas:</p> <p><i>'I heard, this morning, waking, / Crossly out of the town noises / A voice in the erected air'</i></p>
Authenticity (authenticate)	<p>The quality of being original, unique. In IB English, all work you submit to the IBO, such as your Individual Oral and the HL Essay, must be authenticated by your teacher.</p> <p><i>Famous writers are celebrated for the authenticity of their work.</i></p>
Author	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (noun) The writer of a text or literary work. (verb) The act of putting together a piece of writing.
Authorial choice(s) (or author's choice)	<p>The deliberate choices an author makes with literary features, the structure, or the language to influence the audience's experience. The IB Diploma English course requires candidates to show appreciation for an author's choices, so when making a statement about a literary work, you need to be able to use literary terms correctly to identify features of the work (perhaps with quotes, but not always), and to explain how the feature is used. (Also known as writer's choice(s).)</p>
Authorial intent	<p>The meaning that the author had in mind when they originally wrote the text. For example, in <i>Death of a Salesman</i>, Arthur Miller's intent was to highlight the illusion of the American dream.</p>
Autobiography	<p>This is an account of the writer's life as written by him/her. It is his/her story written in their own words. This is not to be confused with a biography which is the story of the life of an individual as written by someone else.</p>