

GCSE (9–1)
Delivery Guide

ENGLISH LITERATURE

J352
For first teaching in 2015

Anita and Me
Meera Syal
Version 1



GCSE (9–1)

ENGLISH LITERATURE

This poignant coming-of-age tale follows Meena, the irreverent teenage daughter of the only Punjabi family in the mining village of Tollington. When she becomes friends with the impossibly feisty Anita, she thinks she's found her soul mate but her world is turned upside down and she finds herself caught between her two cultures.

Anita and Me paints a colourful portrait of village life in 1970s West Midlands during the era of flares, power cuts and glam rock.

This Delivery Guide contains background information on the original novel, suggested activities (English and Drama) and an interview with the director of the play adaptation.

If you have any feedback on this Delivery Guide or suggestions for other resources you would like OCR to develop, please email resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk

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The study of a modern text (prose or drama) from the British Isles is compulsory in all the new GCSE (9–1) English Literature specifications. Teachers should be aware of some key changes in the assessment that will affect how the text is taught:

- The examinations are 'closed text' and there are no tiered papers.
- In the comparative part of the exam task (part a), candidates must show understanding and close analysis of an extract from their set text alongside a thematically linked, same genre unseen extract. They do not refer more widely to their set text in this section. For the part a) task, appreciation of context (AO3) is assessed; candidates should therefore make reference to contextual factors that are relevant to their knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the extracts only. The relevant contextual factors will be concerned with social and cultural situations or experiences, which can be inferred from details in the extracts.
- For part b) of the exam task on modern texts, candidates have an opportunity to show wider understanding of their set text by writing about other moment/s in the text.

Overview of Component 1 – Exploring modern and literary heritage texts

Assessment overview – 50% of total GCSE

- 80 marks
- two-hour written paper
- one studied modern prose or drama text
- one studied 19th century prose text.

Assessment objective overview

Component Exploring Modern and Literary Heritage Texts (J352/01)	Intended weightings (% of GCSE)				Total
	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	
Section A: Modern prose or drama Part a	5	2.5	5		12.5
Section A: Modern prose or drama Part b	6.25	6.25			12.5
Section B: 19th century prose	8.75	8.75	5	2.5	25
Total	20	17.5	10	2.5	50

Required skills

Learners should be able to:

Reflect critically and evaluatively on their reading. Learners are expected to respond to some of the following:

- themes, ideas and issues
- atmosphere and emotion
- plot development
- characters and relationships
- language
- relevant social, historical or cultural contexts, or literary contexts such as genre
- pay attention to the details of a text: understanding the significance of a word, phrase or sentence in context
- demonstrate the ability to read at a literal level and also explore deeper implications
- explain motivation, sequence of events and the relationship between actions or events
- identify and interpret key themes
- make an informed personal response, justifying a point of view by referring closely to evidence in the text
- reflect critically and evaluatively on a text, using an understanding of context to inform reading
- recognise and evaluate the possibility of different valid responses to a text
- explain and illustrate how choice of language shapes meaning
- analyse how the writer uses language, form and structure to create effects and impact
- use relevant subject terminology accurately to support their views
- produce clear and coherent pieces of extended writing
- select and emphasise key points and ideas for a particular purpose
- develop and maintain a consistent viewpoint
- use textual references and quotations effectively to support views
- use accurate Standard English and spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Exam questions

This component is worth 80 marks: 40 marks for Section A and 40 marks for Section B.

- **Section A:** Modern prose or drama (25% of total GCSE (9–1))
Learners study **one** modern prose or drama set text. Learners respond to one extended response-style question on their studied text, which is divided into two parts: a) a comparison of an extract from the studied text with a modern, same-genre unseen extract and b) a related question on the same studied text.
- **Section B:** 19th century prose (25% of total GCSE (9–1))
Learners study **one** 19th century set text. Learners respond to one extended response-style question on their studied text, from a choice of two: an extract-based question, making links to the whole text OR a discursive question.

In developing their comprehension and critical reading skills, the emphasis is on learners engaging personally with their reading and building confidence in their abilities to sustain an individual response which is supported and justified. In relation to this, learners reflect on the contexts in which texts are set, for instance, those relating to social structures, cultural identity or shared experience. Learners develop their own viewpoints supported by textual evidence, while at the same time recognising that there are different interpretations that other readers could make.

Learners analyse and evaluate how language, form and structure inform and impact on their reading of texts.

Learners are encouraged to explore modern literature more widely, through reading a diverse range of modern prose and drama extracts and texts. This enables them to develop their critical and comparative understanding of texts. Through engaging with different texts, learners can begin to discover how understanding of one text is illuminated by its relationship with another. This prepares them for making fresh comparisons between their studied text (printed extract) and a thematically linked unseen modern prose or drama extract in the exam.

In developing their writing and oracy skills, learners gain the confidence to articulate a sustained, informed personal response to their reading. They are able to reflect on their reading for different purposes, as explored in the suggested activities in this guide. These focus on close reading of the novel and the play adaptation and provide an opportunity to back up learners' understanding and ideas.



Synopsis

Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* is a coming-of-age tale, telling the story of rebellious tomboy Meena, the young daughter of the only Punjabi family in the fictional mining village of Tollington. Her parents despair that she's never going to be a 'good Indian girl'. Feeling like an outsider and desperate to fit in with the other youngsters in the community, Meena befriends the bad girl of the village Anita Rutter. Meena's friendship with Anita helps her feel accepted, Meena fights for her attention and approval by trying to emulate her in a bid to fit in. Meena thinks Anita is everything she wants to be, but she begins to understand more about her own identity, caught between her two cultures – a rural, white working-class village and her own Punjabi heritage.

Meena encounters racial prejudice by many characters, most notably from tearaway Sam Lowbridge and his gang, which has a big effect on Meena as she tries to understand the differences and tension between people. When Meena's mother has a baby, she is visited by Nanima, who helps Meena understand her heritage and the reasons her parents came to England – to give her a better life and education. At school, Meena must pass the Eleven Plus so that she can attend grammar school.

Racial tensions in the village grow when work begins on a new motorway that will cut through the village. When diggers arrive to demolish the local primary school, an Indian man is seen overseeing the process, furthering tensions in the area. Sam shouts a racist slogan into a local news camera. The next day, the Indian man is attacked and robbed.

At the end of the novel, Meena and her parents leave Tollington to start a new life in Wolverhampton.

Meera Syal – the author

Meera Syal, CBE, was born in 1963, growing up in the mining village Essington in the West Midlands. Her family moved to Britain from New Delhi in 1960, making Meera a first generation immigrant. Meera is a writer, actress and comedian, gaining a Double First in English Literature and Drama at Manchester University. Meera credits her childhood experiences of growing up between two very different cultures as influencing her work.

She has written novels and screenplays of *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* and *Anita and Me*, *Bhaji on the Beach*, *My Sister Wife* and *Bombay Dreams*. Her television credits as an actress include: *Goodness Gracious Me*, *The Kumars at Number 42*, *The Boy In The Dress*, *Broadchurch*, *The Brink*, *Family Tree*, *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, *My Sister Wife*, *Beautiful People* and *Dr Who*.



Historical context: the Black Country

The Black Country is an area to the north and west of Birmingham in England. It is in the West Midlands. The name Black Country originates from the nineteenth century, when the region had become one of the most important parts of the Industrial Revolution in Britain.

The region was the major producer of metalwork. Machinery and goods were mass-produced by the iron, steel and copper industries, which encouraged and supported the expansion of transportation networks with the building of bridges, canals and railways.

Coal mining took place in hundreds of pits throughout the Black Country, producing coal required to power and heat factories and buildings such as iron foundries and steel mills.

The scale of the metal industry and the burning of fossil fuels in the area created heavy air pollution, with a thick black smoke clouding the skies and black soot colouring the communities below. This is where the name Black Country is believed to have originated. Eilhu Burrit (US President Lincoln's diplomat) famously described the region as 'black by day and red by night' in 1868.

By the mid-twentieth century, less than a hundred years later, the industries that the area had become dependent on were now in decline. Although there was a demand for iron in car manufacturing, the closure of coal mines throughout the 1960s created high unemployment for men who had worked there. The decline of the manufacturing industries was made worse in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with over 300,000 jobs lost.

Men who were now unemployed expected to find work in factories. However, they found that many of the jobs were performed by women. World War II had shifted women's roles in society, with many women finding jobs that were previously unavailable to them.

World War II had also devastated the country and its population. The Government focused on rebuilding the country quickly and encouraged immigration from Europe and Commonwealth countries such as India and Pakistan.

Some people resisted the changes to their communities and were prejudiced against immigrants who were perceived to be responsible for the lack of jobs.



Historical events in India

India became independent from British rule on the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947. At the same time, parts of India were partitioned off, mainly for political and religious reasons – West Pakistan (now Pakistan) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were created. The new Pakistan was to be a Muslim state while the main religions in India would be Hinduism and Sikhism. Hundreds of thousands of people were relocated, many involuntarily, to the country that was of their religion. Many people were angry and resistance caused violence and bloodshed in the regions. Other than British nationals who had lived in India, there were many people who preferred to move to the UK rather than relocate as a result of partition or to live in an independent India.

The British Nationality Act of 1948 granted the right to live in the UK for all those people who lived in colonies of the Empire. It is through this act and subsequent legislation that Meena's family came to, and stayed in, the UK.

There were direct benefits to the country. Following World War II, many industries experienced a shortage of workers. One example was the railways which found new workers amongst the Anglo-Indians (mixed race people of both British and Indian descent born in India) who had run the railways in British India and who returned to their 'home' country on and after independence in the late 1940s.

The post-war establishment of the National Health Service meant that the UK needed more and more qualified staff and more importantly qualified to British standards and in British practices. Doctors and nurses from the British Empire were the perfect solution. Also, during the 1950s and 1960s, a large number of South Asians settled in the industrial towns of the West and East Midlands and the North to work in their factories and textiles businesses.

Due to increased concern about the large numbers of former colonial citizens relocating to the UK the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed in 1962. This put more limitations on immigrants and prioritised qualified and educated professionals working in education and healthcare.



Focus on friendship

1. Working in mixed groupings of four to five people (in order to have both male/female perspectives), spend about five minutes thinking about the qualities which make a good friend. Then spend five minutes thinking about qualities which might make an undesirable friend (or at least one your parents wouldn't approve of!).
2. Working with a partner, select an important incident involving Meena and Anita and create a comic strip/photo story of it.
3. After this, one of you could narrate the incident from Meena's perspective while the other could narrate it from Anita's perspective.
4. Complete a diary entry based on this incident. The quality of your entry will depend on your ability to reveal a character's inner thoughts, as opposed to his/her words or actions.
5. Plan and write the essay: 'Analyse the friendship between Meena and Anita, and discuss how realistic you consider it to be.'

Letters

Imagine that you are the characters below and write letters from:

- Meena to Anita after the end of the novel
- Mrs Worrall to Meena after she has moved away
- The letter from Deidre explaining why she is leaving
- A letter from Nanima to Meena.

Monologues

Write a monologue for Anita or Meena looking back over their life. Imagine it is that day and they are looking back over their life. Include their thoughts and feelings.

Now choose someone you know from your life. Is it possible to do the same exercise? You can start to invent things to help the story of the monologue.

When writing about memory, include the colours, smells and sounds; this will bring your writing to life.

Exploring the characters

Give one of the names of the characters from *Anita and Me* out to each student. Ask each student to write a profile of that character, adding words that they feel describe or that they associate with the character plus key quotes, from them and about them.

Pair up the students who have worked on different characters and pool ideas adding more comments. Group students together who have worked on the same character and discuss similarities and differences.

Use these profiles as a resource when writing in role, or when being hot-seated.



A play adaptation of Meera Syal's much-loved novel burst onto the stage for the very first time in 2015, a World Premiere, produced by the award-winning playwright, Tanika Gupta and with specially composed music by the Ringham brothers.

Anita and Me

Main characters:

MEENA KUMAR	13 year old Asian girl
ANITA RUTTER	15 year old English girl
SAM LOWBRIDGE	16 year old local youth. Tearaway.
SHYAM KUMAR	MEENA'S dad. Early thirties.
DALJIT KUMAR	MEENA'S mum. Early thirties
NANIMA	MEENA'S grand mother. Elderly Asian woman. Punjabi speaking.
AUNTY SHAILA	Asian woman. SHYAM and DALJIT'S friend. Mid thirties.
FORTUNE TELLER	Travelling fortune teller at fair
UNCLE AMMAN	Asian man. SHYAM'S friend. Mid thirties.
MR BHATRA	Asian council official
HAIRY NED	Band leader
BAZZER	SAM'S friend/thug

CHORUS of four women (singers)

Mouthy wenches known as the Ball Bearings committee

MRS WORRALL	Elderly friendly neighbour
MRS ORMEROD	Christian sweet shop owner
DEIDRE RUTTER	ANITA'S mum
TRACEY	ANITA'S sister
SANDY	Local young woman
MRS LOWBRIDGE	SAM'S mum

(Also **NANIMA**)

Suggested Activities using the play text

Extract 1

- MEENA** Going anywhere on your hols?
- SAM** Yer joking ain't you? Never go anywhere – apart from me Auntie Katie's place in Wolverhampton. She hates us. Yow going to Paki land?
- MEENA** Don't be stupid. It ain't called that! It's called Pakistan and we ain't from Pakistan. India!
- SAM** Ain't that the same place?
- MEENA falls about laughing**
- SAM** What?
Yow're so thick Sam Lowbridge.
- SAM** Really think you're something special! I thought we was mates.

Issues to consider

- What does this scene tell us about Meena?
- What does it tell us about Sam?
- Do you think their friendship is genuine?
- Rewrite this conversation and imagine it is the present day instead of the 1970s. What are the differences?

Extract 2

SHYAM Meenal!

MEENA And yow're really fat now mum.

The BALL BEARINGS COMMITTEE gasp in shock

DALJIT (Furious) Sometimes I don't recognise you Meena. What has happened to you?

SHYAM Daljit...

DALJIT No Shyam. It's high time this girl stopped behaving like a spoilt brat. Have some consideration for other people's feelings Meena. You are turning into a rude and horrid little girl. I feel ashamed to call you my daughter.

DALJIT exits, upset. MEENA looks amazed

Issues to consider

- How would you describe the relationship between this mother and daughter?
- Why do you think Meena is speaking to her mother like this?
- What do you think of her mother's reaction?
- Have you ever lost your temper and said something you regret to a family member? Write a short monologue telling us about your memory.

You can find suggested activities with a drama focus here:

Teacher resource

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/357659-anita-and-me-delivery-guide-teacher-resource.doc>

Extract 3

MEENA But what about me?

ANITA What about yow? I don't wanna go out with yow do I?

MEENA But we'd still be mates if yow 'get' Sam?

ANITA thinks about it for a minute

ANITA Not if yow go to that posh school. Yow wouldn't want to hang with the likes of me. And I'd be dead embarrassed to be seen with a snobby, poncey grammar school chick.

MEENA I wouldn't change. I'd still be the same me.

ANITA Would yow still get me sweets?

MEENA Yeah!

ANITA We'll see then shall we?

As ANITA walks away, MEENA looks worried.

Issues to consider

- How do you think Anita and Meena feel about each other?
- Does Meena like Anita more than she likes her? Discuss.
- Think about your friendships. Are they similar to this one?



Interview with Roxana Silbert, director of *Anita and Me*, the play adapted from the novel of the same name

What drew you to directing this play?

It was one of my favourite novels. I read it a long time ago and I loved the humour and warmth in it. I love the friendship in it which is at the heart of the book. It felt to me to be very recognisable. A coming of age drama; what it is like to try and decide who you are in the world. Because I grew up in a small town and I loved that it was set in this very small community and what happens when you are different from the community that you are brought up in and where you seat yourself between the two communities. The community is such a loving and warm community and the friendship is so recognisable because she gets a crush on the bad girl at school and I think that's really common.

How did you adapt the novel for the stage?

Adapting a novel is really difficult because in a novel you can describe what goes on in people's heads and on stage you can't, you can only tell what someone is like by what they do and what they say and in the novel you can hold lots of different stories together and in a play you can't, you have to have one strong arc that drives you through the play to make it such a fine experience. When you are adapting a novel like this you have to decide what is the most important thing about the novel that you are going to concentrate on. There are a lot of things you can't put on stage because you haven't got enough space.

Does the play have an important message about friendship?

I think that the book is about friendship and so is the play. We decided that the friendship between the two girls was the most important thing in the novel so we wanted to put it on stage. I think that when young people are at that age, (and in the novel they are younger, nine and eleven, we made them teenagers) you can see Anita behaves very badly, but you can see that it is because she has had a horrible upbringing. There are inferences of sexual abuse. Her mother is not interested and abandons her. Her father is probably not a good father to her, but you can still see the person that she could be, because she is feisty and funny and energetic and bright. You can see that given the right circumstances and context she could have been extraordinary, but you feel for her because she hasn't got any love in her life. Meena provides her with that great love in her life.



Anita is cool and popular at school. She has a very unhappy family life whilst Meena, she is basically very, very loved and so you kind of know that she is going to be alright because you know that this is going to be a blip in her journey and she tries to give Anita love and Anita doesn't know how to accept that love and doesn't know how to love back, she doesn't know what love is.

Do you think Meena has learnt from the relationship?

I think she has learnt what friendship and love is and whilst Anita is very cool and glamorous she is not a good friend, she is not a kind friend. She doesn't put Meena's feelings and best interests at heart and so I think that what she learns is where the real love in her life is, unfortunately it is not from Anita because Anita can't give it.

How relevant is the play to a contemporary audience?

I think that moment when you are in transition from being a child to being an adult remain the same whether it is 1800 or 2015. I think that this is always relevant because it is about the challenges you face when you are thinking about what kind of adult you want to be. It has been very interesting because the cast is half Asian and half White and we have cast quite young actors and they feel that they face some of the same problems culturally in trying to understand who they are in a world where their family identity and the school identity are very different from each other. I do not think that it is specific to being Asian, I think that there are lots of circumstances in which people feel that who they are in their family is not who they are at school and the two things don't really reconcile. The idea of a community that is lost and people yearning for a sense of community is very, very strong, so that makes it very relevant because it's something we feel we have lost and yearned for. Even then, post 1972 there is a sense in which this very tight-knit community has been torn apart by modernism and in the play it is a road that comes from Wolverhampton, but it's like the HS2 going through Warwickshire today, it's the same feeling that your idyll has been kind of torn apart and it's modernism and it's progress and lots of good things will come of it, but actually you lose the heart of something as well.

It is interesting how Meena's family is accepted even though they are not British originally.

I think it is very interesting about prejudice, because it is very complex; so the character Sam thinks that he doesn't like foreigners, but he loves Meena and he is friends with Meena because he knows her and likes her very much. He does not see her as foreign. There is something about when you get to know someone they are not alien to you. Why is it that you don't like certain types of people? Is it fear or jealousy? It was very difficult in the 1970s, there was a lot of unemployment, the car industry had fallen apart, the unions were being broken down and people were very frightened of not getting jobs and so the people become the enemy and this is when you look for people to blame. I don't think that it is easy to explain why. They talk a lot about it in the play.

Does the music have a key role in the play?

The play has music in it but it's not a musical. Meena often sings to agony aunts and she makes up songs because she is a girl that makes things up and she is imaginative; when she and Anita make friends they make up songs together. A lot of it is in the book and in the book there are ironies, like Meera Syal talks about these very racist women putting out their washing singing along to the radio without really understanding what they are singing and the consequences of it. This is something that happens in popular music in the Seventies, it changes and you get a lot of hippie eastern music.

I use music in a lot of my plays. I like the way music works on the stage, so in this play it does several things. It lets you know the period of the play (and we are setting the play in 1972), also how culture is changing over that period, so we are going from a post-war world into a post-Thatcher world and that's all concentrated in how the music changes. It also shows there is a conflict in Meena's world, in her love for pop music, what she does at the shops, how she talks to her friends at school and the music in her family which is more Punjabi and Bhangra music, which is a very important part of her culture. We are also playing with the music in terms of her cultural identity and her conflict of identity. Also because she is a very imaginative girl in the novel, which is very hard to show on stage, she makes up songs a lot and her and Anita make friends by making up songs as well. It is a way of showing how imaginative she is as a young woman.



In terms of a starting point, how are you going to start rehearsals?

It is very hard to direct this play because there is a lot of music and movement in it so the actors not only have to be brilliant actors but they have to know how to sing and dance and all of those things have to happen around the same time. The first thing that we shall do is look at the model box so that the actors get a sense of what the space is like and the world they are in and then we will read the play. We will just sit and talk through the play. I don't usually talk about issues, I usually talk about characters and stories because through the characters and stories the issues emerge.

I like to do the first part of the rehearsals with the whole company around the table talking about the play and asking questions. It's a new play so there will have to be some re-writes to get it ready as we work on it. It will become clear what we are doing and so for example on Monday we will see the model, read the play and Meera will talk about her experiences growing up. We will also learn the first song and on Tuesday morning, we will choreograph the first song and carry on working on the play on Wednesday. We are going to go to the Black Country Museum because it is the closest environment the play is set in that I can find. I really want the actors to sort of feel what it might have been like and then we will start putting it onto its feet.

Do you have close links with the writer throughout the whole process?

Yes and of course there are two writers, the writer of the novel, Meera Syal and then the writer of the play, Tanika Gupta. Luckily they are really good friends.



Is the play similar to the novel?

The spirit of it is very close to the book. All of the dialogue and everything that happens is taken straight out of the book. Where it is not similar to the book is the amount of stuff that we have had to leave out, as it is already hours long. It could be ten hours long!

Describe the play in three words.

Warm, vibrant and touching.



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