

## 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 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 PLA (Prescribed List of Authors) and the PLT (Prescribed Literature in Translation List). 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.

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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 <b>phrase</b>)</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 <b>existentialism, nihilism</b>)</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 <b>plagiarism</b>)</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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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: <u>'Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors/My very noble and approved good masters.'</u> (Act 1, Scene 3)</li> </ol>
Account	<p>Also known as a <b>report</b>, 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>
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)	<p>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.</p>
Acronym	<p>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 <b>initialism</b>) or <b>IOP</b> (an <b>initialism</b>) with CAS (an acronym).</p> <p>(see <b>initialism</b>)</p>

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 <b>passive voice</b> )
Adage	A saying that contains a universal truth about the nature of life, the human condition, etc. For example, from 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 <b>formal</b> 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.
Adjacent	Next to, very near to, immediately following or before. <i>Two adjacent lines in the poem.</i>
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 <b>verb</b> or <b>adjective</b> , for example, <i>rapidly, kindly, or diligently</i> . In English, we often add -ly 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 <b>advertisements</b> that promote the same product, service, or idea during a specific period of time. For example, you can choose an advertising campaign as the source text for your <b>Written Task 1</b> in Part 1 of the Language & Literature course.
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 <b>slogan</b> , 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.

# F

Feminism	The view or belief that a woman should have the same opportunities and rights in society that a man has; that there should be no discrimination on the basis of gender. Leading authors who have written about feminist themes and women's issues include Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, and Alice Walker.
Fiction (fictional)	Literature where stories are based around imaginary events and made-up characters. (see <b>non-fiction</b> )
Figurative	Language that has a different <b>meaning</b> to its <b>literal</b> one. It is often used to make a text more complex, to emphasize a point, or to express strong emotions, etc. Figurative language includes a variety of techniques such as <b>similes</b> , <b>metaphors</b> , <b>hyperboles</b> , etc.
Figure of speech	A generic term to refer to a range of <b>figurative</b> language, such as <b>metaphors</b> , <b>personification</b> , or <b>similes</b> .
First draft	An early version of a written text which may only contain the main points in outline plan form, not fully finished.
First-person point of view	When a text is written in the first person, it is written using the pronoun 'I', so the author is writing about himself or herself, describing his or her own experiences. It creates a more personal account. An <b>autobiography</b> is written in the first person.
First-person narrator	A <b>narrator</b> who describes the events and characters in a novel from the point of view of one of the <b>characters</b> . This means that it allows the writer to describe events personally as the character experiences them, but the character can't participate in a variety of different scenes at the same time, which can limit how the writer tells the story. It also means that because the writer is a character, everything we read is through their eyes and through their emotions which might mean readers don't get the full picture. (We say the narrator is unreliable.) (see <b>unreliable narrator</b> )
Five senses	As humans, the five senses we can use are sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. When a writer uses imagery in their writing, the language often relates to these abilities.
Fixed form	A description for a poem that can be identified by a recognised style with traditional rules in relation to the number of lines, its rhythm, or rhyming pattern. For example, a sonnet (which always has 14 lines) is a fixed form, as is a limerick. (Also called <b>closed form</b> .)
Flashback	A <b>literary device</b> where the author takes the reader to another time, to events that have previously taken place before the current narrative. A flashback usually gives background to the current <b>character</b> , place, or events, or may create <b>suspense</b> and intrigue.
Flashforward	A <b>literary device</b> where the author takes us forward in time to a later event or time than the current narrative. As a separate scene, a flashforward presents what <i>will</i> happen later in the story. Compare with <b>foreshadowing</b> , a device to predict or foresee what might happen later.
Flat character	A character who does not change throughout the course of the <b>narrative</b> and lacks the complexity of a <b>round character</b> .
Fluent (fluently)	To use spoken or written language effectively so you can communicate ideas, thoughts, opinions, and information clearly, effectively, and with confidence.



Fly-on-the-wall narration/narrative	A form of narrative where the narrator sees every event in the story. They are able to see the characters but take no part in the events themselves and so are not 'seen' by the characters either. (see <b>third-person omniscient</b> narrative)
Flyer	A short, printed text used by an organization to advertise or market their products or services. A flyer is a single printed sheet, unlike a <b>brochure</b> that can have printing on both sides of the sheet and may be folded to emphasize particular sections.
Focal point	In visual texts, the most important part of an image that draws the attention of the viewer. The focal point is closely linked to the message of the text.
Foil character	A character who is used by the author to contrast or compare with another character, usually the main character (or <b>protagonist</b> ). The foil's characteristics help make the protagonist look even better or sometimes to show their weaknesses. In Henrik Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> , Christine Linde is a foil character to the protagonist, Nora Helmer. She exhibits the traits of the independent woman that Nora will become by the end of the play.
Foot (plural feet)	In literature, a repeated unit of <b>rhythm</b> that we use to describe poetry. One foot represents one stressed and one unstressed <b>syllable</b> .
Footnote	An additional note that you add at the foot (or bottom) of a page to provide extra information or reference details for a <b>quotation</b> or paraphrase you have included on that page.
Forceful	A way to describe someone when they are confident, express their opinions strongly, and are not embarrassed to get attention.
Foregrounding	A device in poetry which involves using language to make it stand out from more ordinary language. It may involve the use of repetition, or changing the structure of language to draw attention to it, or for emphasis. This might create a phrase, sentence or line of poetry that is unnatural or even grammatically inaccurate, but that appears attractive or powerful, anyway.
Foreshadowing	Where the author writes in suggestions or hints about something that might happen in the story. This is usually subtle through <b>imagery</b> or a specific use of language so as not to give away the full story. (see <b>flashforward</b> )
Form	The <b>structure</b> and shape of a poem. (see <b>fixed form/closed form, open form</b> )
Formal	Official, serious, and correct – the opposite of casual and relaxed. As part of your IB studies, it also represents an element of <b>register</b> , particularly important for Language & Literature students to understand in the analysis of <b>Paper 1</b> texts. You are also expected to write your IB essays and the <b>IOC</b> in formal register (both Literature and Language & Literature students).
Formal features	The features related to the form of a text, such as <b>structure, style</b> , etc. You must address the formal features of the text(s) in your <b>Paper 1</b> essay.
Formalism (formalist)	A way of carrying out <b>literary criticism</b> which focuses on the form of the language, the text itself. Formalism as a school of thought dates back to early 20 <sup>th</sup> century Russia. It is not interested in the author as such, or the historical or cultural background of a text. Formalists believed they were taking a more scientific view of literature to help understand how writers manipulate language to create a specific effect.

## Stream of consciousness

A narrative technique that describes the characters' natural flow of thoughts, and which can sometimes appear chaotic or disjointed. This technique was very popular with early 20<sup>th</sup> century writers such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, or William Faulkner. In *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, for example, the reader gains insight into the thoughts running through Mrs Ramsay's mind as she is planning her day:

*'She had a dull errand in the town; she had a letter or two to write; she would be ten minutes perhaps; she would put on her hat.'*

## Stress (stressed)

The emphasis placed on a particular **syllable**, word, or phrase. For example, a word may contain stressed syllables which are higher in pitch or slightly louder, as in *IMMO*ral. Stressed syllables are important in identifying the metric pattern within a poem.

(see **metre**)

## Structuralism

An intellectual movement of the 1950s and 1960s where literary critics considered that the **structure** of texts (that is, the **plot**, **characterization**, **setting**) placed them into larger systems of texts sharing similar traits. As such, the meaning of a text is dictated by the rules of the system to which it belongs. For example, if a poem is written in sonnet form, then the meaning of the poem is shaped by the conventions of the sonnet as a genre.

## Structure

- 1 The way content is organized within a written, spoken, or visual text. In **Paper 1** (for Literature and Language & Literature), for example, you are expected to analyse how structure shapes the meaning of the text(s). This means that you must consider the structural conventions of the text (which might include, for example, narrative, poetic, and visual) as well as other elements such as linear or circular patterns, significant repetitions, layout, etc.
- 2 How you organize your ideas in essay writing and oral presentations. High marks are awarded for a **coherent**, **logical** structure.

## Structured and focused commentary

A commentary that is well-organized and focused on a main idea, **theme**, or **argument**. This will enable you to score a high mark on Criterion C in **Paper 1** and the **IOC**.

## Style

The way in which a text is written, based on the author's own choices. This could include **diction**, **tone**, linguistic devices, structural elements, **layout**, etc. In the IB Diploma English, you are expected to have an awareness and understanding of the writer's style in a variety of different text types.

## Stylistic devices

The techniques that define the **style** and contribute to the **meaning** of a text. These include **figurative language**, **rhetorical strategies**, connotative diction, etc. In **Paper 1** and the **IOC**, it is not enough to identify the stylistic devices in the text(s); you must also discuss their effect on the reader and how they develop larger ideas in the text(s).

## Sound imagery

Also known as **auditory** (or **aural**) **imagery**, a type of imagery that evokes sound or noise, for example, in *When I Woke* by Dylan Thomas:

*'I heard, this morning, waking, / Crossly out of the town noises / A voice in the erected air'*

## Subject

- 1 The topic of a text which could be, for example, love, revenge, or social injustice.
- 2 A word or a phrase followed by a **verb** in a **sentence**. For example:  
The essay is due in one week.

Subordinate clause	A dependent clause in a <b>complex sentence</b> , usually introduced by a <b>conjunction</b> : <i>The student scored high marks in the final exams <u>because he studied very hard throughout the year.</u></i>
Subplot	A secondary plot that supports the main <b>plot</b> in a novel, play, or film. It may involve the <b>protagonist</b> , the <b>antagonist</b> , and other <b>minor characters</b> in the narrative. The subplot adds more complexity to the story as it can develop certain <b>themes</b> , or add more depth to the characters, for example.
Subsequent	Describing something that happened or occurred after an event, a discussion, or a moment. For example, during your <b>IOC</b> , your commentary is followed by a subsequent discussion with your teacher.
Substantiate	To provide <b>evidence</b> in support of an <b>argument</b> or an <b>opinion</b> . In <b>Paper 1</b> and the <b>IOC</b> , your analysis must be substantiated with <b>references</b> to the text(s) or extract.
Subtlety ( <i>plural subtleties</i> )	Detail that is not so obvious but very important. In <b>Paper 2</b> , you are expected to address the subtleties of the question in order to score a high mark on Criterion B. This means that you have to pay attention not only to the main focus of the question but also to its possible implications.
Succinct	Brief and to the point, concise. It is recommended that your IB Diploma essays for English are written in succinct language.
Suffix	A letter or a group of letters added to the end of a word. This can either place the word into a different grammatical category, as in: <i>love (noun) to lovely (adjective)</i> or change the entire meaning of the word, as in: <i>love and loveless</i>
Suitable (suitability)	The trait of being appropriate to a particular occasion, task, etc. For example, the <b>register</b> of your <b>IOC</b> must be suitable to the discussion of literary texts.
Summary	Also known as synopsis, it is a very brief overview of the main points in a text. An effective, focused summary addresses the following questions about the text: <i>where, when, who, what, why</i> , and <i>how</i> . A summary should not include personal <b>opinion</b> or <b>analysis</b> , nor should it contain <b>quotes</b> from the original text.
Summative assessment	A test, essay, project, or oral presentation used to evaluate the student's learning, knowledge, and skill at the end of a unit, term, or semester, for example.
Superficial	Broad, general, without much depth or attention to detail. For example, 'a superficial attempt at interpretation' will only receive two marks on Criterion A in <b>Paper 1</b> (HL) in the Literature course.
Supervised	Under someone's observation or guidance. For example, supervised class time will be allotted for some of the writing of your <b>Written Assignment</b> or the <b>Written Tasks</b> .
Supported	Made stronger with the help of something. For example, your <b>analysis</b> of <b>Paper 1</b> texts must be supported by detailed <b>references</b> in order to score a high mark on Criterion A.
Suspense	A feeling of excitement, tension, or nervousness in anticipation of something which is about to happen. In literature, suspense acts as a narrative hook that captures the interest of the reader. Suspense usually leads to the <b>climax</b> of a <b>narrative</b> .