EMC Survey into Diversity and Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Secondary English

Earlier this year, the English and Media Centre (EMC) carried out a survey to investigate how diversity and anti-racism are approached in English classrooms. We wanted to find out about changes that English departments made and continue to make after the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement gained momentum in 2020. We wanted to set the work within the context of EMC's long-standing commitment to promoting a diverse curriculum and practising an anti-racist pedagogy (see *Race: a discussion document for teachers*) and also in relation to more recent work pertinent to the English teaching community, such as the *Reflecting Realities* reports (CLPE 2017-2022) and the *Lit in Colour* report (Penguin 2021).

The survey was distributed via EMC's email list and social media feeds. In total there were 91 respondents, drawn from a range of sources listed below. While not in and of themselves representative of the English teaching population, the reach was relatively wide and varied.

State secondary (non-selective)	42 respondents (46%)
State secondary (selective)	6 respondents (7%)
Private	12 respondents (13%)
International	6 respondents (7%)
Unidentified	19 respondents (20%)
Total	91 respondents

The findings have been set out question by question with some broad conclusions and follow-up questions at the end.

Q1 What do you understand by diversity in the English curriculum?
91 respondents

The majority of respondents understood diversity in relation to text choice. There was a general view that texts should reflect the diverse life experiences of students in schools as well as of people in the wider world.

This response was typical:

Choosing texts that (1) reflect or represent the lives and experiences of our students or (2) broaden their understanding of human experience by exposing them to texts that go beyond what they personally have thought or known. Having a curriculum that reflects a range of thoughts, experiences and circumstances.

The idea of going 'beyond' suggests a model of English in which students are exposed to multiple perspectives, something reinforced by the use of 'range' in 63 responses and 'voice' in 25 responses. Often this was linked to drawing on texts featuring the perspectives of particular identity groups, with many answers listing different categories, such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, LGBTQ+ class, disability, age, culture, religion among others.

Here are some examples of such responses:

Ensuring students encounter a range of voices, particularly voices that have been marginalised in the past due to their race, gender, sexual orientation.

Representing ALL of the students we teach and ALL of the teachers who teach with characters, settings, experiences, and writers who are of every race, religion, sex, gender, physical ability, and social class.

I understand diversity in English as being an embedded and well-taught focus on texts written across a variety of contexts by a variety of authors of a diverse number of ethnicities, gender identities, textual forms, and cultural heritages.

Respondents, then, generally understood diversity in in English to be a broad concept encompassing many different identities. It's interesting to note how many times different words occurred. 'Gender', for example, was mentioned by 34 respondents, while 'race' was mentioned by 24, 'black' by six and 'ethnic/ ethnicity' by 18. Class was mentioned 16 times, sex and sexuality 20 times and LGBT (or LGBTQ+) five times. Responses were not entirely separate from issues around anti-racist pedagogy, explored in later questions, with 10 respondents linking diversity to challenging the 'white' canon.

15 responses mentioned 'literature', along with 25 references to 'texts' and 'text choice', while only five referred to 'language'.

Q2 Since 2020, would you say that your department has diversified the English curriculum in any way?

An overwhelming 90% of respondents felt they had diversified their curriculum since 2020 (82 responses). Five answered 'no' and six responded 'I don't know'.

Q3 If yes, please describe what changes you have made, including any text changes and any changes to your English Language curriculum (please specify which key stage)

The majority of changes described related to texts in the KS3 curriculum. However, the opportunity for coursework at KS5 was also identified as a space where teachers could make diverse text choices.

The following novels were named:
The Dark Lady, Akala
Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line, Deepa Anappara
Noughts and Crosses, Malorie Blackman
Boys Don't Cry, Malorie Blackman
The Bone Sparrow, Zana Fraillon
Coram Boy, Jamila Gavin
Refugee, Alan Gratz
When Our Worlds Collided, Danielle Jawando
Sawbones, Catherine Johnson
Pigeon English, Stephen Kelman
The Crossing, Manjeet Mann
Beloved, Toni Morrison
Purple Hibiscus, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche
The Hate U Give, Angie Thomas
Girl. Boy. Sea., Chris Vick
Minty Alley, C. L. R. James
Windrush Child, Benjamin Zephaniah

The following modern plays were named:
Crumbs from the Table of Joy, Lynn Nottage
A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry
A Streetcar Named Desire, Tennessee Williams

39 respondents reported diversifying their poetry curriculum. A small number of schools were using EMC's Iridescent Adolescent and Diverse Shorts short story anthologies, while others taught units that explicitly addressed issues of representation or identity such as a 'Hidden Voices' unit, a unit about 'Identity poetry', a unit on 'Empire', a unit on 'myths and legends from around the world', a unit on speeches to directly address issues of racism and 'standing up for what is right', and units that collated different non-fiction/fiction extracts.

At KS4, the unseen components of the English GCSEs (extracts in English Language and poetry in English Literature) were identified as the areas that provided the most opportunity to include texts by diverse writers or to teach different perspectives or issues relating to diversity. There were six mentions of the new AQA poetry anthology – Worlds and Lives – with teachers either having decided or currently deciding whether to switch to this anthology. However, many respondents expressed frustration about the limited scope of the exam specifications and the lack of motivation or support from exam boards to make changes to KS4 text choices.

Another interesting finding was the repeated reference to Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* (14 mentions). 10 respondents had removed or replaced the text from their KS3 curriculum. The reason for this change was reported by one respondent as due to 'the discomfort caused to many students by the use of racist terms' and others described the decision being made 'due to problems of representation and staff discomfort' or 'due to derogatory representations'. Another respondent described the book as 'upsetting to students and staff'. Ideologies the book sits within were clearly challenging to navigate sensitively in the classroom. Three respondents had engaged with the text's potentially problematic place in the curriculum, deciding to proceed teaching 'with caution', 'increased sensitivity' or by making conscious edits to the text. One respondent suggested that the book offers a way of talking about discrimination and described the re-introduction of the text as a conscious way of 'diversifying' the curriculum.

It's interesting that while respondents offered a broad definition of diversity in English in Q1, curriculum changes largely involved selecting texts by writers of colour, which often dealt with race as part of their subject matter. Respondents used several phrases linked to race, such as [writers of] colour (7), Black (11), Asian (2), race (10), ethnic(ity) (4); correspondingly there were five mentions of 'women', five of 'gender' and 10 of 'female'. This slight shift in balance suggests that the majority of changes to curriculum have been around issues of race. These were predominantly to do with text selection, but there was also one mention of 'World Englishes', one of 'raciolinguistics' and two of 'racial literacy'. The first two terms, however, were used in the context of A Level study and one of the respondents using the latter worked in teacher education, suggesting that issues of language and diversity are explored relatively infrequently in KS3 and KS4 classrooms.

**Q4 On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel that your curriculum is diverse?
91 respondents**
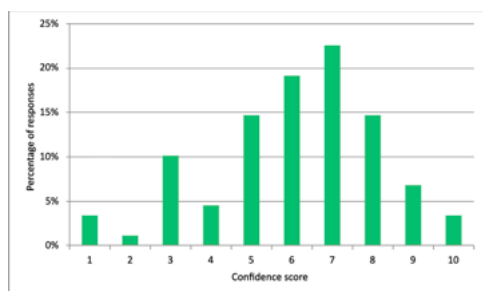
The majority of respondents felt confident that their curriculum was diverse, with the most common score being 7/10 (20 respondents), followed by 6/10 (17 respondents).

The responses citing lower levels of confidence (13/91 respondents were between 1-4/10) may be explained by the lack of choice or agency teachers have in making wider curriculum decisions.

**Q5. What do you understand by 'anti-racist pedagogy'?
90 responses, 1 skipped**

There was more uniformity to this response than the question about what was understood by diversity. Generally teachers identified anti-racist pedagogy as an active process, with the word 'teach/teaching' appearing in 51 responses, 'challenge/challenging' in 22 and 'active/actively' in 37.

Typically responses included:

Using pedagogical approaches to highlight the misconceptions about race and draw attention to discrimination and injustices in our society.

Directly tackling older texts (OMAM, Mockingbird etc.) which use taboo language or perpetuate stereotypical views of different races.

Openly and explicitly challenging underlying racial prejudice and assumptions through teaching.

Teaching that overtly tackles issues of racism.

Promoting anti-racism in the classroom rather than talking about not being racist. Encouraging students to use their voice to vocalise anti-racism.

Many answers considered the wider implications of the term, seeing anti-racist pedagogy in English as a tool to address structural racism. This is exemplified by the following responses:

Openly and explicitly challenging underlying racial prejudice and assumptions through teaching.

Having an active approach to challenging racism and dismantling racist structures inherent within the education system. Recognising, challenging and changing racism and a curriculum that enforces racist beliefs.

Actively teaching - and reforming all aspects of school policy - to counteract systemic racism, racial prejudice and racist ideologies. Providing opportunities for students to consciously engage with racial biases and challenge them.

There was a sense of a responsibility to create safe spaces for students to engage with and think critically about issues relating to racism. Respondents expressed understanding of the wider implications of their work as English teachers, promoting an anti-racist approach 'so that we might disrupt a culturally engrained normalcy towards racism'.

The use of the word 'bias' (mentioned 14 times), often as part of the phrase 'unconscious bias' (five mentions) acknowledged the position of teachers and students within wider structural systems. Here are two responses where this was raised:

Recognising issues such as unconscious bias, institutional and systemic racism, changing teaching practices to address these imbalances.

Teaching practices that look to promote equality and equity; it means making progress towards greater equality instead of just maintaining the constant by challenging stereotypes, bias and ensuring representation and a sense of belonging for all our students. This may mean we need to be more equitable to start with in order to gain equality.

Q6. Since 2020, would you say that your department has actively engaged with anti-racist pedagogy in any way? Can you give examples? E.g. training, classroom practices, etc.
87 responses, 4 skipped

A majority of respondents were able to cite specific examples of engagement with anti-racism in their departments and schools. This was mostly linked to departmental or whole staff training and to whole school initiatives.

Engagement at departmental level tended to relate to discussion and curriculum decisions, often led by a head of department or a teacher who was passionate about the issue. For example:

Half a day discussing our approaches as a department: discussion of which texts to use and if/how we might use any older texts which might contain some offensive language and mapping out a more inclusive curriculum.

Some responses suggested significant changes had been made:

We've explored BLM, backlash, migrant 'crisis' and the rhetoric in the news, and have a celebratory focus during Black History Month, rather than the oppressive tendency to merely focus on 'Black pain' and the slave trade. We want to celebrate the very diverse population we have, and to develop that, we sought feedback from students. We've brought in more texts from Black, Asian, and Indigenous authors, and have set projects for students to explore the folk tales and stories from their own cultures. Particularly when teaching "Checking Out Me History," we explore the impact of colonialism and assess the impact British colonialism has had on cultures around the world.

Whole school initiatives mentioned included working parties/groups set up to address issues of anti-racism; a whole school role called 'Diversity and Inclusion Champion'; assemblies; displays around school; the introduction of an anti-racism policy; the editing of a previous behaviour policy to include anti-racist approaches; resources for PSHE; Black History Month and Multicultural March.

External CPD providers for both English and whole school initiatives included: The Black Curriculum, Class 13, Becoming Anti-Racist with Nova Reid, Show Racism the Red Card, British Library anti-racist Shakespeare, training from awarding bodies, and EMC events that addressed issues related to race such the 'Reflecting Realities in Secondary English' panel featuring Bennie Kara, Darren Chetty and Farrah Serroukh and April Baker Bell's webinar.

Not all responses were from teachers in schools where there had been active engagement with anti-racist pedagogy. For example, a few answers emphasised the onus being on individual teachers:

No, not as an organisation. As individuals, as scope allows.

No. Although I try to incorporate into my own teaching.

There were also a significant number of responses that answered 'no' or something similar (e.g. 'not really'), with some respondents expressing frustration and feeling that engagement with anti-racist pedagogy in their institutions was inadequate.

No - actually, I tried leading a dept training on this in 2020 when I had just joined the school, but I don't think it really stuck and there was no follow up.

I resigned from my previous school because they did not address issues and would not engage in anti-racist pedagogy.

We had done utterly rubbish anti-racist training on unconscious bias by the main guy for government who told us facts but allowed teachers to sit smugly thinking isn't that terrible rather than challenging our own unconscious bias. It revealed nothing and just confirmed people as not needing to change.

Q7 On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel that you practise anti-racist pedagogy?
87 respondents, 4 skipped
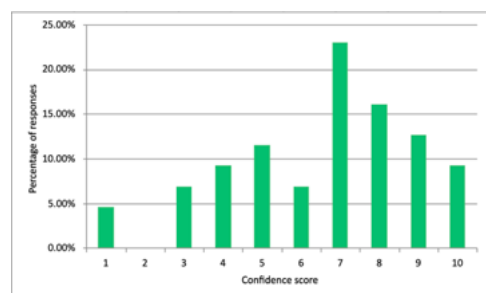
The majority of respondents felt confident that they practised anti-racist pedagogy, with the most common score being 7/10 (20 respondents), followed by 8/10 (14 respondents) and 9/10 (11 respondents).

It's interesting that respondents were more confident that they practised anti-racist pedagogy than that they had a diverse curriculum. This is perhaps indicative of the lack of agency they have in making text choices, compared to teaching in particular ways and would fit in with the fact that a significant number of responses to Q6 wrote about anti-racism in terms of challenging the racism found in texts that they taught, such as *Of Mice and Men* and *The Sign of the Four*.

Q8 Do you feel that any initial changes you made have been sustained or developed further?
87 respondents, 4 skipped

68% of respondents (59 respondents) felt that initial changes have been sustained or developed further. 10% (9 respondents) answered 'no' and 24% (21 respondents) answered 'I don't know'.

Q9 Please provide more detail (follow on question from Q8)
58 respondents, 33 skipped

Often respondents returned to text choices to exemplify how changes have been sustained or developed.

Ongoing improvement and reviewing our curriculum e.g. how we can include LGBTQ+ writers?

The new curriculum has been well-received by staff and students and our students feel their curriculum is much more relevant. We have continued to update and amend our SOWs e.g. about to introduce The Facility into our curriculum and intend to change GCSE poetry anthology.

Adaptations and changes were often described as a reflective process, subject to regular evaluation and review:

It never stops. It must be dynamic and continuous dialogue, leading to practice.

It's ongoing work which won't stop!

… the process is ongoing

There were few references to sustained changes to pedagogy, perhaps highlighting a disconnect between diversifying the curriculum and practicing anti-racist pedagogy. The following response highlighted this:

We have simply changed our choice of texts, not our approach to teaching. The desire to support students in developing anti-racist viewpoints is perhaps implicit in the approaches taken to Morrison's text but not, I suspect, explicit.

The distinction of implicit and explicit approaches to a text is thought-provoking and raises questions around what anti-racist pedagogy looks like when teaching texts that directly address issues of diversity/racism.

Contrastingly, one respondent described changing the way they teach a familiar text and highlighted the use of student voice to inform practice that aims to be anti-racist:

We frequently review the texts we teach and the way we teach them. For example, although we have taught 'Coram Boy' for many years, we have recently enhanced the way we teach about the slave trade; similarly with Bertha Mason in 'Jane Eyre'. We ask for student feedback on the texts we choose and the ways in which we teach them.

Another respondent commented on how their department had chosen to adapt their pedagogy rather than change the text choices, considering the longer-term outcome of developing students who are critical readers and thinkers:

It started off with looking at Of Mice and Men as a text and looking at the value in teaching such explicit racism (and sexism, attitudes towards disability, mental health etc). Through this, we looked at our own practice in terms of what we teach, how we teach and why we teach. Not teaching a text like Of Mice and Men is not necessarily the answer. How we teach it is what needs to be addressed. We have worked a lot on the contextual offering we give our students and how this is developed over their secondary education. We want students to understand where ideas have come from and to live and learn in an environment where they may need to self-correct but we are not just 'correcting' but acknowledging where (for example) such unconscious bias may have stemmed from.

Other responses suggested sustained change had become more of an individual cause for teachers with not enough being done on a department/school level. For example:

Perhaps in select classrooms, but only by teachers who have an active approach to this. There is nothing systemic within the school to actively look at this or make it a priority.

They have been developed in my own teaching and sustained. However, this is not something sustained elsewhere in the department. It feels very tokenistic.

Q10. Did you face any obstacles to making changes? If so, what were they?
78 respondents, 13 skipped

A small number of respondents reported no obstacles (15).

The majority of responses identified a number of different obstacles, including:
- Resistance from white parents
- Resistance to change from staff. Reasons for this included not believing in the need for change, staff being 'dismissive' of change and attachment to texts that had been taught for a long time, 'racist colleagues'
- A willingness to change texts but not practice
- Lack of money and resources
- Staff discomfort and lack of confidence
- Workload constraints
- Rigid GCSE requirements and limited text choices

Some of the most interesting responses to this question were related to the racial make-up of a particular school's students and staff and show how ingrained some obstacles to change are.

Lack of buy-in from department heads and more experienced staff who are reluctant to change things and see no problem with keeping things as they are. (I work in a school that is predominantly white middle and working class.) I find this deeply frustrating. Some members speak mockingly/playfully about a progressive agenda as a 'right on' thing done only by lefty liberal teachers.

My school is in a predominantly white area. 99% of pupils and staff are white. SLT is white. Leadership does not seem to know how to proceed/understand the need for certain changes and just pay lip service to equality and diversity days (although they do better slightly better with gender and sexuality stuff). An example in the past is calling all the non-British/white pupils down to put a sticker on a map in the foyer to map their heritage. I find it demeaning.

Staff confidence - the majority of our faculty is made up of white female teachers so not all staff members felt confident talking about racism when they hadn't had any personal experiences of it.

Some staff coming from the assumption we are saying 'all white teachers are racist' which is absolutely not what was said. Having to tap into people's unconscious bias was very uncomfortable for many.

Some staff feel less confident with delivering certain texts so we make time at department meetings to discuss approaches and experiences, as well as encouraging observations among the team.

The issue of the school being mainly white in staff and students so certain individuals were made to feel to stand out when race was discussed.

Q11 Were SLT involved in making any changes? If so, what was their role?
81 answered, 10 skipped

Levels of SLT engagement or involvement with changes varied widely. 40% of respondents (33) answered 'no', while others reported support to a range of different degrees.

The lack of consistency here, and the relative lack of SLT involvement relative to changes being made at departmental level, suggests that English teachers themselves were often driving changes, with diversity and anti-racist pedagogy at the core of their vision for the subject.

Q12 How have students responded to the changes?
78 responses, 13 skipped

The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive, with 82% (64 respondents) describing the positive impact of changes on students. Words used to describe the response included: *positively, wonderfully, excellently, love, engaged, excited, enthusiastic, confidence, eager, comfortable, invigorating, buzz.*

Here are two examples which demonstrate this impact on students:

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They love the new curriculum! They report that their English lessons feel much more relevant to them and reflect the world around them. Some of our quieter students have more confidence to speak up during discussions. Increase in reading for pleasure, especially following The Poet X.

In my experience students (and their parents, actually) respond to this really well. Hearing voices that chime with their own experiences or explore issues from a diverse range of identities has been invigorating and allows them to study texts (e.g. modern poetry, song lyrics, contemporary novels and non-fiction) that speak of present/relevant concerns and experiences.

Interestingly, several responses suggested that diversifying the curriculum and drawing on anti-racist pedagogy led to increased engagement with the subject. Often teachers linked this to new texts reflecting the lives of a diverse student body, but this was not always the case. One teacher noted the positive responses of students in 'a mostly white, working-class school' explaining that new texts had 'really opened their eyes to other points of view and perspectives'.

Responses such as these suggest that the current National Curriculum is failing students not just in terms of text selection and implied pedagogical approaches, but in terms of what they come to understand English to be. This was further highlighted by a teacher who wrote that their '*Students have greatly enjoyed Iridescent Adolescent - however, it is so unique that students are often confused about how it fits into the grand scheme of the curriculum as a whole.*'

Q13 Do you teach, or are you considering teaching any of the following texts at KS4 for GCSE:
Princess and the Hustler by Chinonyerem Odimba (AQA)
My Name is Leon by Kit De Waal (AQA)
Worlds and Lives poetry anthology (AQA)
Boys Don't Cry by Malorie Blackman (Edexcel, Eduqas)
Anita and Me by Meera Syal (Edexcel, Eduqas)
Oranges are not the Only Fruit by Jeanette Winterson (Eduqas)
Leave Taking by Winsome Pinnock (AQA, Eduqas)
Time and Place poetry anthology (Edexcel)
Belonging poetry anthology (Edexcel)
The Empress by Tanika Gupta (Edexcel)
Coram Boy by Jamila Gavin (Edexcel)
Refugee Boy by Benjamin Zephaniah (adapted for stage by Lemn Sissay)
81 respondents, 10 skipped
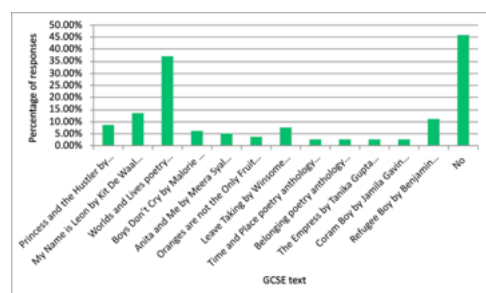
The most popular answer to this question was 'no', with 46% of respondents not teaching or considering teaching any of the texts introduced by exam boards in an aim to diversify the

curriculum. The second most popular response to this question was 'Worlds and Lives poetry anthology' with 37.04% of respondents considering teaching the new AQA cluster. The remaining responses were relatively consistent, with a few respondents selecting each of the other texts; with *My Name is Leon*, *Refugee Boy* and *Princess and the Hustler* being considered/ taught by slightly more respondents than the other options.

Q14 If you have KS5 at your school, do you teach any 'diverse' texts as part of your curriculum?
79 respondents, 12 skipped
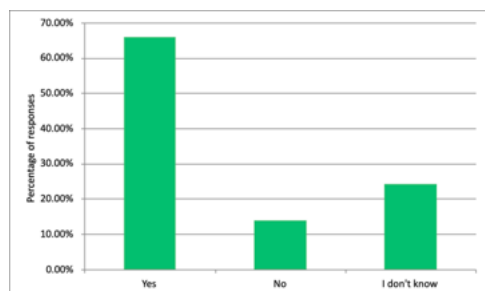
66% of respondents answered 'yes' to this question (52 responses), 24% answered 'I don't know' (19 responses) and 14% answered 'no' (11 responses), suggesting that where teachers do teach KS5, they generally have the opportunity to teach 'diverse' texts.

Q15 If yes, which 'diverse' texts do you teach? If no, are there any particular reasons for this?
62 respondents, 29 skipped

The answers to this question suggest the range of KS5 text choices is significantly broader than at KS3 or KS4 (see Q3). Here is a list of the writers and texts that are named in responses, and the number of mentions of either the writer and/or text:

Writer	Text(s) specified	Mention (writer and/or text)
Chinua Achebe	Things Fall Apart	1
Monica Ali	Brick Lane	1
Maya Angelou		3
Patience Agbabi		1
Anthony Anaxagorou	After the Formalities	1
Margaret Atwood	The Handmaid's Tale	7
Amiri Baraka	Dutchman	1
Pat Barker	Silence of the Girls	1
James Baldwin	If Beal Street Could Talk	3
Elizabeth Barrett-Browning		1
Octavia Butler	Parable of the Sower	1
Truman Capote	In Cold Blood	1
Angela Carter	The Bloody Chamber	1
Willa Cather		1
Tsitsi Dangarembga	Nervous Conditions	1
Daphne Du Maurier	Rebecca	1
Carol Ann Duffy	Feminine Gospels	6
	The World's Wife	1
Caleb Femi	Poor	1

Charlotte Perkins Gilman	The Yellow Wallpaper	1
Moshin Hamid	The Reluctant Fundamentalist	3
Lorraine Hansberry	A Raisin in the Sun	2
Natalie Haynes	A Thousand Ships	1
Khaled Hosseini	The Kite Runner	5
Langston Hughes		3
Zora Neale Hurston		1
Henrik Ibsen	A Doll's House	1
Kazuo Ishiguro	Never Let Me Go	1
	Remains of the Day	1
Jackie Kay		1
Claire Keegan	Foster	1
Hannah Kent	Burial Rites	1
Jhumpa Lahiri	The Namesake	1
Nella Larson	Passing	2
Andrea Levy	Small Island	3
Audre Lorde		1
Katherine Mansfield		1
Countee McCullen		1
Carson McCullers	The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter	1
Claude McKay		1
Kai Miller		1
Madeline Miller	Circe	1
Toni Morisson	Beloved	5
Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche	A Thousand Splendid Suns	3
		2
	Half of a Yellow Sun	1
	Americanah	1
	Purple Hibiscus	
Grace Nichols		1
Solomon Northup		1
Lynn Nottage	Crumbs from the Table of Joy	2
Barack & Michelle Obama		1
Ruth Ozeki	A Tale for the Time Being	1
Sylvia Plath		1
Claudia Rankine	Citizen	1
Jean Rhys	Wide Sargasso Sea	1
Roger Robinson	A Portable Paradise	1
Christina Rossetti		2
Arundhati Roy	The God of Small Things	1
Donal Ryan	From a Low and Quiet Sea	1
Sam Selvon	The Lonely Londonders	1
Mary Shelley	Frankenstein	1
William Shakespeare	Othello	4
Lemn Sissay	My Name is Why	1
Zadie Smith	White Teeth	2

Katherine Stockett	The Help	2
Ocean Vuong		2
Derek Walcott	Omeros	1
Alice Walker	The Color Purple	3
Sarah Waters	The Little Stranger	1
Colson Whitehead	Underground Railroad	1
Tennessee Williams	A Street Car Named Desire	4
Jeanette Winterson	Oranges are Not the Only Fruit	3
Oscar Wilde	The Picture of Dorian Gray	2
Richard Wright	Native Son	3
	Poems of the Decade (Edexcel)	1

It is interesting to note that many of the responses have a sense of uncertainty as to what 'counts' as diversity. Diversity in terms of gender is one category that appears. For example:

Diverse for us is women so Carol Ann Duffy and Margaret Atwood

The poetry of Barrett-Browning

Depends what you mean by diverse; we do Handmaid's and Frankenstein, both written by women.

Diversity in terms of sexuality seems to be mostly related to the writers' sexuality, rather than representation in the content of texts taught, as exemplified by this response:

So I would say Carol Ann Duffy and Tennessee Williams can be regarded as diverse due to their sexuality.

Diversity in terms of race is clearly an area where KS5 teachers introduce and teach students an array of texts, but it is interesting what some of these choices are. *Othello* is mentioned 4 times, and two respondents question whether this is appropriate to list as a 'diverse' text:

...unless Othello counts?!

Othello- although arguably not diverse

Similarly, other texts that have potentially problematic issues of representation, such as *12 Years a Slave* or *The Help,* appear. One respondent acknowledges this and describes the pedagogical approach used to address such issues:

I realise this is problematic but we taught students to challenge it and see it through a historicist lens; it runs lovely alongside A level History as they do a civil rights unit.

The NEA/ coursework is mentioned 9 times, suggesting that this is an area where KS5 teachers can often choose the texts they teach, as demonstrated by the breadth of the above list (most texts are not on any exam specifications). It is also interesting to notice the number of modern texts that are included at KS5 in comparison to older texts.

Q16 Is there anything else you would like to add about diversity and anti-racism in English? e.g. the effect of racism on students and staff, particular experiences relating to these issues, changes you would like to see on a school/exam board/ policy level.
56 respondents, 35 skipped

Many of the responses to this question are thoughtful and detailed, offering insight into a range of issues.

Constraints imposed by the National Curriculum and statutory assessment requirements were identified as a key barrier to significant change.

There needs to be more systematic change from the top, including exam boards. The lack of diversity in texts is worrying and does not represent other curriculums in other countries.

Personally, I think the entire exams process serves to disadvantage students. The offerings are not diverse or broad enough, and the fact there's no coursework element or individual exploration of texts is concerning. Truly, this is the only country I know of that actively seeks to fail their population to maintain a bell curve.

Our level of student interest in English drops of markedly when we move from Year 9 into the constraints of GCSE: it's a shame and I suspect part of that is due to the shift in focus in the curriculum.

I would like to see more change reaching the upper echelons of my institution, and I would also really like to see change at exam board level and policy level in terms of attitudes towards Standard English and the range of set texts that are offered. It's hard to make changes that don't have repercussions once students step out of the English classroom, and we are very affected by the need to get our students excellent grades for progression to Higher Education and jobs, while also challenging the systems that they have to work within.

There was a sense that the work that awarding bodies have done to diversify specifications was not enough; respondents suggested that more support and training was needed to ensure changes were embedded.

The GCSE curriculum is a significant barrier but also people should recognise that it takes time to read, read around, buy class sets and develop resources for new texts. Just adding some diverse options to a curriculum when old favourites exist is not likely to lead to diversity.

More resources provided by exam boards to incentivise change, time given to change the curriculum and create new resources.

... In 2020 I created a campaign asking AQA to change their English Lit specification, they committed to the change as a response, they have now 'done' it in their eyes, but haven't done much in the way of teacher training or providing robust resources to support teachers making the changes.

The biggest impact would be if boards got rid of the texts that teachers have become tirelessly attached to - namely, An Inspector Calls.

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There was also an acknowledgement of the challenges faced in terms of the racial make-up of staff and students:

We are a very non-diverse school both in terms of staff and in ratio of ethnically diverse pupils. We still have a long way to go

As a majority white school, we would love training on this. Exam boards should insist of diverse content and ensure their unseen extracts are from diverse writers too.

...I also think much more work needs to be done in predominantly white schools and outreach work needs to be done to highlight which this is important (it should be obvious but lots of schools, e.g. in more rural areas, still don't think this applied to them). In terms of the effects, students aren't taking English A Level, most people in 'English' jobs are white so the effects are a huge problem.

One respondent highlighted the challenges faced by teachers of colour:

I'd like more support as a member of staff. I've never worked with another Black English teacher and this is very isolating. Members of staff need training on how to facilitate meetings discussing racism and changing resources. We also need training on restorative practices if things have been challenging. Sharing of good practice and new resources would be helpful. Teachers need time to read widely. The exams also need to reflect a changing curriculum.

In many responses, there was a sense that teachers and educators need more support and a clearer agenda in relation to diversity and anti-racism. Individual teachers, departments and occasionally SLT doing the work alone was not enough. Without input and vision from awarding bodies and government, or making systemic change a priority, teachers were left with limited options for improvement. This final response highlighted this sentiment and drew attention to some of the complexities:

The very notion of diversity needs to be made more complex. Relationship between texts and readers needs to be interrogated more. Representation is not, in itself, a form of justice. Further, encouraging students to become independent readers and interrogators of canon has to be the real goal. Reading more more more is how we change things. Not simply by thinking of replacing one exam text with another. In fact, at its worse, such thinking can backfire. In the hopes of diversifying our curriculum, my predecessors chose Kelman's 'Pigeon English.' This was seen as a worthy and diverse choice. In addition to being a poor novel, the choice itself and the premise it was based on is highly problematic. These choices and ideas are complex and deserve larger debates that are only just beginning. The solutions are a bit too easy for me. That said, I celebrate the discussion.

NB
A small number of responses were critical of the purpose of the survey itself and used their responses to share their disapproval of the survey, making provocative statements that could themselves be regarded as racist. We've chosen not to include these in the final data.