

# English Language A- level Summer Homework



## Let's get introduced...

Welcome! We're very pleased that you've chosen to take English Language at A-level. The following four tasks are designed to keep you busy before we begin the course fully in September. This booklet is just a flavour of English Language; it is themed around regional voices, accents and dialect. This is a topic you will study further as part of the A-level.

We look forward to meeting you!

*Miss Wiseman, Miss Davies, Miss Dixon, Mrs Hartley and Miss Whiting*

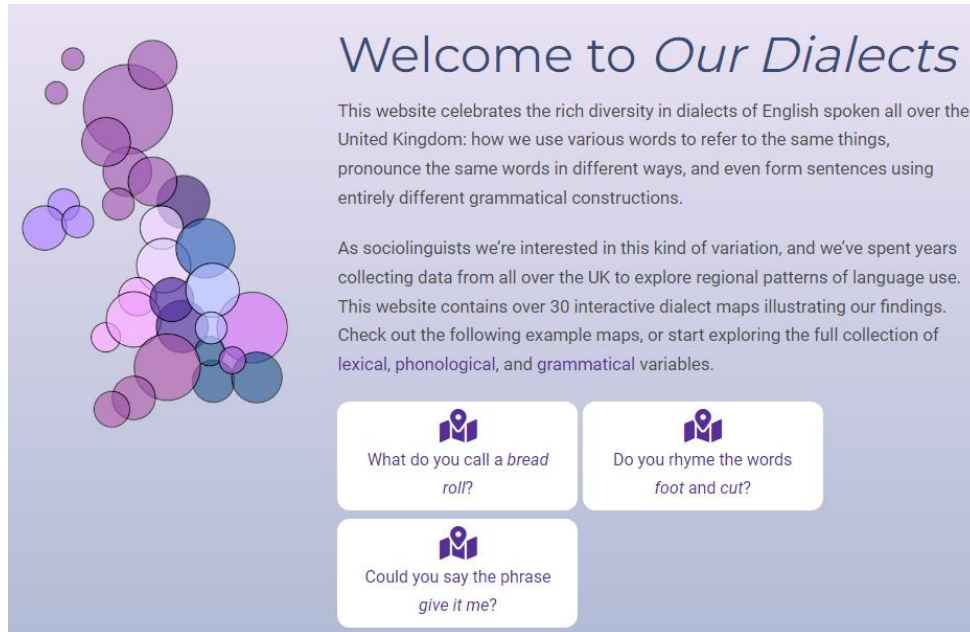


## Task 1: Exploring dialect

**Access the website:** [www.ourdialects.uk](http://www.ourdialects.uk)

It gives you a chance to see how people say or respond to particular words and phrases and which areas of the UK these are most prevalent in.

Consider the three options shown below.



**Welcome to *Our Dialects***

This website celebrates the rich diversity in dialects of English spoken all over the United Kingdom: how we use various words to refer to the same things, pronounce the same words in different ways, and even form sentences using entirely different grammatical constructions.

As sociolinguists we're interested in this kind of variation, and we've spent years collecting data from all over the UK to explore regional patterns of language use. This website contains over 30 interactive dialect maps illustrating our findings. Check out the following example maps, or start exploring the full collection of lexical, phonological, and grammatical variables.

What do you call a *bread roll*?

Do you rhyme the words *foot* and *cut*?

Could you say the phrase *give it me*?

Let's think further about some specific dialect words. These are words that are used in a specific area, where others may not understand or have not been exposed to these terms before.

***Do you know the word 'twitchel'? Where does it come from? Who uses it? What are some alternatives used in other parts of the country?***

Make a note of what you find about this particular dialect word.



*Conduct research into another dialect word you know.* This should be a word of your choosing (e.g. mardy, cob). Write your findings below, consider who uses and where it comes from.

*[Tip: searching the etymology of the word can help you find information. Etymology refers to the origins of words and how their meanings have changed throughout history.]*

This is also a useful website when searching for the origins and meanings of words:  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com>



## Task 2: Thinking about accents

A survey by a travel company recently questioned 1.5 million people as to what they believed were the most and least attractive British accents. They found the Birmingham accent was voted the least attractive, whereas the Essex accent was the most attractive. Here is the full article so you can look at the findings: [The Top 50 Sexiest Accents In The UK - Ranked Big 7 Travel \(bigseventravel.com\)](https://bigseventravel.com/2017/01/10/the-top-50-sexiest-british-accent-ranked-big-7-travel/)

*Do you agree? Why are some accents so divisive compared to others?*

*After reading the two articles below, research the Birmingham and Essex accent. What do you notice about the general reactions to these?*

Make a note of your research below.

<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-accent-worse-silence-scientists-9667622>

<https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/18064331.people-speak-essex-accent-face-discrimination-study-finds/>



### Task 3: Investigating accents

You are going to complete your own mini language investigation. You are going to look into the Birmingham and Essex accents further, considering that these two accents were recently voted differently in terms of attractiveness.

*Ask approximately ten people for their opinion regarding the Birmingham and Essex accents* (you can do this virtually if you'd prefer!) You may ask others for their opinion more generally, you may ask them to describe each accent in a word or you may ask for how attractive they find these accents.

*Gather together the results. How have people described these two accents?*

You can present this research in any way that you like; I am interested to see how you gather this and report upon your findings. After you have completed this research, you will need to *show me the findings in the space below or attach it to the booklet if you've completed this on the computer.*





## Task 4: Writing about accents and dialect

George Bernard Shaw famously wrote: “it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him.”

You are going to consider whether or not you agree with the statement above from famous playwright, George Bernard Shaw. He is insinuating that people will always be judged for their accents and dialects. *Do you agree?*

*You are going to write a short opinion article, outlining your point of view in relation to this statement. Do you think people are judged for their accent and dialect? Do you think this is fair?*

Think of this like writing a Section B for your GCSE Paper 2. Your opinion is needed here; the reader should be in no doubt as to what you think.

*Read the following professional opinion article and consider how they have approached this task:*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/10/accntism-yorkshire-regional-dialects-english-snobbery>

*Now write your own short opinion piece.* It does not need to be as long as the example – keep it to three or four paragraphs. Keep it interesting, engaging and let the reader know your opinion about Shaw’s statement and judging people based on their regional voices!

*This piece should be handwritten below; you should bring this whole summer homework booklet with you to your first English Language lesson in Sixth Form.*







## Challenge yourself... want to know more about this topic?

If you are interested in this topic and would like to gain more knowledge before the A-level begins, the following is a list of optional resources. Feel free to dip in and out of these as you like. Enjoy!

**Read and research:** This is a website for a project which is currently examining and researching prejudices and biases against accents. In particular, they have considered how this may impact people in their careers.

<https://accentbiasbritain.org>

**Listen:** This is a Radio 4 segment called Word of Mouth. Here, the discussion is about accents and dialect, particularly around how very young children might pick this up.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b01s4g7g> [The first five minutes are particularly interesting].

**Watch:** An interview with Howard Giles – an accent, dialect and language theorist. He explains Communication Accommodation Theory, where people change their language and accent to suit their audience. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KExeBNB5wy8>

**Read:** An article about the rise of ‘accentism.’ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jul/14/do-accent-matter-modern-britain#maincontent>

