

# Headline Findings

## A survey of English teachers for the British Library



**15<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

## METHODOLOGY

### Methodology Note

ComRes interviewed 520 secondary school and college English teachers online between 16<sup>th</sup> April and 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014.

### Guidelines for the Public Use of Survey Results

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- The company conducting the research (ComRes)
- The client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, post, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc.)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage

Published references (such as a press release) should also show a web address where full data tables may be viewed, and they should also show the complete wording of questions upon which any data that has entered the public domain are based.

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## TOPLINE FINDINGS

### Summary of interim findings

- Overall, it is clear that there is a desire among English teachers to make their lessons more inspiring; almost three in five (57%) of teachers say that it is difficult to inspire students with the resources currently available. Additionally, they perceive students as struggling to identify with both classic authors of English literature (82%) and engage with older literary texts (83%).
- English teachers perceive that students prefer digital media than books (83%), and that overall, students rely on online resources for research (93%). However, they also tend to say that current resources available to students are uninspiring (57%), and that they appreciate the value of first-hand original manuscripts and historical documents for students (82%).
- Similarly, there is a desire among teachers to have more access to resources (90%), recognition that English literature needs to embrace digital technology (86%), and that access to digital resources needs to be improved (82%). English literature is extremely highly regarded by English teachers, and student access to it is considered to be of enormous importance.

### Interim results

- **English teachers' perceptions of their students**
  - Around four in five (82%) English teachers say that students find it hard to identify with many of the celebrated classic authors of English literature (e.g. Dickens, Bronte, Wordsworth, Shelley, Austen). Three quarters (76%) English teachers agree that students find it difficult to perceive the classic authors of English literature as 'real people'.
  - More than four in five (83%) English teachers say that students find it hard to connect with older literary texts, and three in ten (29%) say that they strongly agree with this statement.
  - Similarly, more than four in five (83%) of English teachers say that students generally prefer digital media to reading books. Three in ten (31%) say that they strongly agree with this statement. Seven in ten (70%) English teachers agree that students tend to find it difficult to engage with the English literature curriculum.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about students?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	NET: AGREE	NET: DISAGREE
Students tend to find it hard to connect with older literary texts	29%	54%	15%	2%	1%	83%	17%
Students generally prefer digital media to reading books	31%	52%	13%	2%	2%	83%	15%
Students find it hard to identify with many of the celebrated classic authors of English literature (e.g. Dickens, Bronte, Wordsworth, Shelley, Austen)	25%	56%	16%	1%	1%	82%	17%
Students find it difficult to perceive the classic authors of English literature as 'real people'	24%	51%	20%	3%	2%	76%	23%
Students tend to find it difficult to engage with the English literature curriculum	18%	51%	25%	3%	2%	70%	28%

Base: All English teachers (n=520)

- **English teachers' perceptions of sources of information for students**

- Almost three in five (57%) English teachers say that it is difficult to inspire students with the literary resources currently available. Four in five (82%) of English teachers believe that it is inspiring for students to experience original manuscripts and drafts.
- More than nine in ten (93%) English teachers say that students often rely on online sources when conducting research, demonstrating the prevalence of internet use for academic study. Around three in five (58%) English teachers strongly agree with this statement.
- Similarly, around nine in ten (92%) English teachers agree that students would benefit from being taught using material that brings to life the historical, social and political contexts in which classic literary texts were written.
- More than four in five (85%) English teachers believe that students tend to leave school with very little experience of seeing original hand-written drafts or historical documents. Younger teachers aged 18-24 years old are more likely than their older counterparts to disagree with this statement, 40% of teachers aged between 18-24 years old disagree, compared to 14% of teachers overall.

- Four in five (80%) of English teachers agree that students have access to the resources that they need to help them achieve the best possible exam grades. Three in five (59%) of English teachers say that the easily accessible resources tend to be uninteresting for students.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about sources of information for students?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	NET: AGREE	NET: DISAGREE
Students often rely on online sources when conducting research	58%	35%	5%	1%	1%	93%	6%
Students would benefit from being taught using material that brings to life the historical, social and political contexts in which classic literary texts were written	48%	45%	6%	1%	1%	92%	7%
Students tend to leave school with very little experience of seeing original hand-written drafts or historical documents	42%	43%	12%	2%	2%	85%	14%
It is inspiring for students to experience original manuscripts and drafts	35%	47%	12%	1%	5%	82%	13%
Students have access to the resources that they need to help them achieve the best possible exam grades	30%	49%	16%	3%	2%	80%	18%
The easily accessible resources tend to be uninteresting for students	20%	38%	31%	7%	3%	59%	38%
It is difficult to inspire students with the literary resources currently available	18%	40%	34%	7%	2%	57%	41%

Base: All English teachers (n=520)

- **English teachers' perceptions about their own teaching**

- Nine in ten (89%) of English teachers say that they would like to have more time to research in order to develop their own subject knowledge. Three in five (61%) English teachers say that they find it hard to keep up with contemporary research in their subject area.

- Nine in ten (90%) English teachers say that they would like more resources to enable them to bring their lessons to life. Likewise, almost nine in ten (90%) would like to bring contemporary research and new ideas into their teaching and planning.
- Similarly, more than four in five (86%) English teachers agree that the teaching of English literature needs to embrace digital technology in order to continue to inspire young people, and a similar proportion (83%) agree that the teaching of English Literature is too often confined to the reading of a small number of set texts.
- Four in five (82%) of English teachers say that digital resources available for teachers need improving. A third (35%) of English teachers strongly agree with this statement.
- Three quarters (76%) of English teachers say that they often do not have enough time to collate the materials they want to make their lessons inspiring. A third (33%) of teachers strongly agree with this statement.
- Three in five (60%) English teachers say that they find it difficult to find reliable and trustworthy sources online, and half (50%) of English teachers say that they find it difficult to keep up with digital technology.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as a teacher?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	NET: AGREE	NET: DISAGREE
I would like to have more time for research in order to develop my own subject knowledge	42%	47%	8%	2%	2%	89%	9%
I would like more resources to enable me to bring my lessons to life	42%	48%	8%	1%	1%	90%	9%
I would like to bring contemporary research and new ideas into my teaching and planning	40%	50%	7%	1%	2%	90%	8%
The teaching of English literature needs to embrace digital technology in order to continue to inspire young people	32%	53%	10%	2%	2%	86%	12%
The teaching of English literature is too often confined to the reading of a small number of set texts	33%	50%	13%	3%	2%	83%	15%

Digital resources available for teachers need improving	35%	47%	15%	1%	3%	82%	16%
I often do not have enough time to collate the materials I want to make my lessons inspiring	33%	43%	18%	5%	1%	76%	24%
I find it hard to keep up with contemporary research in my subject area	23%	38%	28%	7%	3%	61%	36%
It is difficult to find reliable and trustworthy resources online	22%	38%	31%	7%	2%	60%	38%
I find it difficult to keep up with digital technology	19%	31%	32%	17%	1%	50%	49%

Base: All English teachers (n=520)

- English teachers' perceptions about literature in the UK**

- More than nine in ten (94%) English teachers agree that English literature is an important part of the UK's rich cultural heritage and our international reputation, three in five (60%) strongly agree with this statement.
- A similarly high proportion (92%) of English teachers say that teachers and students across the UK should have access to the nation's literary treasures. Half (50%) strongly agree with this statement. Four in five (80%) agree that English literature risks becoming outdated unless it becomes easier for students and teachers to engage with it in new ways.
- Two thirds (67%) of English teachers agree that English literature and the UK's literary heritage is accessible for young people, however three in ten (30%) of English teachers disagree with this statement. More than four in five (86%) English teachers say that English literature risks being underappreciated by today's students unless more is done to inspire them.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about literature in the UK?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	NET: AGREE	NET: DISAGREE
English literature is an important part of the UK's rich cultural heritage and our international reputation	60%	34%	5%	1%	1%	94%	5%
Teachers and students across the UK	50%	42%	5%	1%	2%	92%	6%

should have access to the nation's literary treasures

English literature risks being underappreciated by today's students unless more is done to inspire them	35%	51%	12%	1%	2%	86%	13%
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English literature risks becoming outdated unless it becomes easier for students and teachers to engage with it in new ways	30%	50%	16%	3%	2%	80%	18%
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English literature and the UK's literary heritage is accessible for young people	20%	47%	28%	2%	3%	67%	30%
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Base: All English teachers (n=520)

• **English teachers' perceptions of what would help them to support their students**

- Two in five (40%) of English teachers say that greater access to free resources would help them to support their students.
- A third (32%) of English teachers say that more trustworthy and reliable online resources for students would provide support, and a similar proportion (32%) say that greater access to engaging digital resources would help them to support their students. A quarter (25%) of English teachers say that more access to original literary drafts and historic documents to bring literature to life would help them to support their students.

**Q. Which of the following, if any, do you think would help you to support your students?**

Selected

Greater access to free resources	40%
More school trips to venues such as libraries, museums, galleries, theatres, etc.	36%
Greater access to engaging digital resources	32%
More trustworthy and reliable online resources for students	32%
Easier access to high-quality film and video content	29%
More resources designed to work well on smartphones and tablets	26%
More access to the historic and cultural collections of libraries, museums, galleries, theatres, etc.	25%



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Greater support from cultural organisations such as libraries, museums, galleries, theatres, etc.	25%
More access to original literary drafts and historic documents to bring literature to life	25%
Easier access to high-quality literary criticism and new critical perspectives	24%
None of the above	2%

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*Base: All English teachers (n=520)*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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