

A level English Language Summer Independent learning (SIL) 2026

Welcome to A Level English Language. Please complete the following tasks ready for your first day at New College.

1. **Watch the following TED Talk:**

https://www.ted.com/talks/justin_baldoni_why_i_m_done_trying_to_be_man_enough?language=en

2. **Read the extract from the above TED Talk printed on page 3. Answer the questions that follow it on page 4.**

3. **Write your own TED Talk in which you discuss an issue important to you.**

You could write about:

- An issue in society, such as the environment
- Politics in the UK or around the world
- An issue or experience personal to you
- Anything else that interests you.

Aim to write around 750 words.

4. **Write 250 words to answer the question:** How have you used language to interest and engage your audience? Refer to a range of language features and use evidence from your speech.

5. **Write a 500-word language autobiography. You could discuss:**

- How the place you were born and the place you grew up (if it's different) have affected your language
- How your language has changed throughout your life
- How your friends and family influence the way you speak
- How you use language when you speak vs how you use it on social media
- How your language is influenced by any interest groups you belong to
- Anything else about your use of language that you would like to share.

Start by researching the following language concepts and include them in your autobiography:

- Accent
- Dialect
- Sociolect
- Idiolect

The following video might also help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAGgKE82034>

On page 2 there is an extract from an example of a language autobiography to give you some ideas and inspiration.

Example Language Autobiography

There are a number of factors which have had influence on my speech over the course of my life. The first of these is probably the speech of my parents. My father has a moderate Yorkshire accent, but my mother has a slight Midlands accent, so my Yorkshire accent was never as strong as that of my neighbours. However, I did, as a child, speak with a definite and at times strong Yorkshire accent, especially when interacting with other children from my area.

My mother's speech has influenced me in other ways, too. She uses a number of idioms regularly, some of which I have adopted. Examples of these are 'It's black over our Bill's mother's', 'Too slow to catch a cold', and 'She's no better than she ought'. These generally sound rather old-fashioned, and perhaps humorous in tone: I would not use them in a formal situation.

My education has also had considerable effect on my idiolect – at school my social group and general surroundings were such that I lost my Yorkshire accent to a great extent, by process of convergence with those around me (who were, largely, speakers of Received Pronunciation or other 'prestigious' accents).

My accent and general speech behaviour change considerably according to context. In formal situations, I take care not to drop [h] sounds at the beginnings of words, and [t] sounds at the end. I am also careful that word-final [ŋ] sounds, such as in 'going' or 'happening' do not become [n], as in 'goin' or 'happenin'.

1	This is the script that we've been given. Right? Girls are weak, and boys are strong. This is what's being subconsciously communicated to hundreds of millions of young boys and girls all over the world, just like it was with me.
5	Well, I came here today to say, as a man that this is wrong, this is toxic, and it has to end. Now, I'm not here to give a history lesson.
	We likely all know how we got here, OK? But I'm just a guy that woke up after 30 years and realized that I was living in a state of conflict, conflict with who I feel I am in my core and conflict with who the world tells me as a man I should be.
10	But I don't have a desire to fit into the current broken definition of masculinity, because I don't just want to be a good man. I want to be a good human. And I believe the only way that can happen is if men learn to not only embrace the qualities that we were told are feminine in ourselves but to be willing to stand up, to champion and learn from the women who embody them.
15	Now, men — I am not saying that everything we have learned is toxic. OK? I'm not saying there's anything inherently wrong with you or me, and men, I'm not saying we have to stop being men. But we need balance, right? We need balance, and the only way things will change is if we take a real honest look at the scripts that have been passed down to us from generation to generation and the roles that, as men, we choose to take on in our everyday lives.
20	So speaking of scripts, the first script I ever got came from my dad. My dad is awesome. He's loving, he's kind, he's sensitive, he's nurturing, he's here. He's crying. But, sorry, Dad, as a kid I resented him for it, because I blamed him for making me soft, which wasn't welcomed in the small town in Oregon that we had moved to.
	Because being soft meant that I was bullied. See, my dad wasn't traditionally masculine, so he didn't teach me how to use my hands. He didn't teach me how to hunt, how to fight, you know, man stuff.
25	Instead he taught me what he knew: that being a man was about sacrifice and doing whatever you can to take care of and provide for your family. But there was another role I learned how to play from my dad, who, I discovered, learned it from his dad, a state senator who later in life had to work nights as a janitor to support his family, and he never told a soul. That role was to suffer in secret.
30	And now three generations later, I find myself playing that role, too. So why couldn't my grandfather just reach out to another man and ask for help? Why does my dad to this day still think he's got to do it all on his own?
	I know a man who would rather die than tell another man that they're hurting. But it's not because we're just all, like, strong silent types. It's not. A lot of us men are really good at making friends, and talking, just not about anything real.
35	If it's about work or sports or politics or women, we have no problem sharing our opinions, but if it's about our insecurities or our struggles, our fear of failure, then it's almost like we become paralyzed. At least, I do.
40	So some of the ways that I have been practising breaking free of this behaviour are by creating experiences that force me to be vulnerable. So if there's something I'm experiencing shame around in my life, I practice diving straight into it, no matter how scary it is — and sometimes, even publicly. Because then in doing so I take away its power, and my display of vulnerability can in some cases give other men permission to do the same.

TED Talk: Justin Baldoni Questions

- 1. Identify the rhetorical question used in line 1. Why do you think Justin Baldoni uses a rhetorical question?**
- 2. Identify the use of juxtaposition used in line 1. Why do you think Justin Baldoni uses juxtaposition?**
- 3. Identify the use of a list in line 4. What effect is created through the listing of these ideas?**
- 4. Identify the abstract noun that is repeated in line 7. What effect is created through the repetition of this word?**
- 5. Identify what type of sentence “I want to be a good human” is in line 10. Is it:**
 - a. A simple sentence?**
 - b. A compound sentence?**
 - c. A complex sentence?****What effect does the use of this sentence create?**
- 6. With reference to lines 13 to 17, explain who the target audience for this speech is and how you know.**
- 7. With reference to lines 18 to 21, explain, using evidence, how Justin Baldoni represents his dad. What language features does he use to do this?**
- 8. With reference to lines 22 to the end of the extract, explain, using evidence, what the message of Justin Baldoni’s speech is. What language features does he use to present this message?**

*Note if you are not sure what any of the above language features are, make sure you look them up. A good understanding of a wide range of language features is essential for the study of A Level English Language.