

Learning to fly in **Politics**

Outstanding students of Politics develop the following skills and habits. Do as many of these as possible to become completely independent in the subject and to develop the skills and knowledge needed to attain A/A* at A Level. **Remember that just doing what your teacher tells you - in your lessons and beyond - is not enough to develop your full potential in the subject.**

In your lessons

- Ask specific questions and for help
- Think critically about your own work and find ways to improve it
- Listen to other students and the teacher and be ready to challenge their ideas and argue with them!
- Think about ways in which new knowledge you encounter in the lesson fits in with what you already know

Between your lessons

- Look back over your notes and activities after each lesson
- Review the work - make sure you know what you have or haven't understood
- Read ahead or around the topic, using books or websites
- Make notes of any questions to ask your teachers or look up
- Contact your teacher, in person or by email, to ask for clarification and guidance.

Beyond your lessons

- Watch relevant, high-quality documentaries, read political/historical novels or nonfiction and keep a brief record in your folder of what you've seen/read and how it relates to what you've been studying
- Talk to your friends and family about what you have seen/read
- Listen to podcasts like **In Our Time** on BBC Radio 4 (available on Iplayer) which discuss specific political themes like consent or sovereignty
- Listen to/read the news
- Develop a sense of the big picture - the history of Britain and the wider world. How does what you've learned in Politics fit into this and where are the gaps in your knowledge?
- Think critically about how politicians and journalists support their arguments (especially in a 'post-truth' world!)

There are numerous sources of broadening your understanding about current politics:

Newspapers

Broadsheets are the most informative resources, for example **the Guardian, the Independent, the Times and the Telegraph**. Access these in the main Library or online. Note the news stories but also the comment, analysis and editorial which offer the most controversial views. The cartoons are brilliant and a good way of gauging public opinion. Most newspapers have a bias towards their target audience, for example the Telegraph is more commonly known as the 'Torygraph!' Despite entertainment value, for the purposes of the exam it is advisable to avoid tabloids at all costs!

Television

The News at 10 on BBC or 7pm on Channel 4. **BBC News 24** and the **BBC Parliament** also can bring you up-to-date. **Newsnight** and **Question Time**, shown late on weekday evenings offer excellent analysis. **The BBC Politics Show** at midday on Sunday is a must. **Daily Politics** is on every day at around midday. This is great for interviews with MPs and political commentary and covers PMQs every

Wednesday. Political satire such as **Have I Got News For You** and **Dead Ringers**. Many BBC programmes are available on I-player.

Radio

The Today Programme from 6 to 9 weekday mornings on Radio 4 is essential listening. You will be asked about events in the news during lessons so if you have a clock radio, tune it to Radio 4. Radio 4 also carries many one off programmes which you can listen to live, listen to online on 'Listen again', download to MP3 or purchase as a podcast.

Books and Films

There are numerous books to read on political issues. Here is a very brief idea.

- **The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour** by Andrew Rawnsley
- **22 Days in May: The Birth of the Libdem Conservative Coalition** by David Laws
- **5 Days in May: The Coalition and Beyond** by Andrew Adonis
- **More Time for Politics: Diaries 2001-2007** by Tony Benn
- **On Western Terrorism, From Hirshima to Drone Warfare** by Noam Chomsky
- **The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion** by Jonathan Haidt
- **The Iron Lady** directed by Phyllida Lloyd

We recognise that you have busy lives and that this level of engagement is not always possible all the time - but this is what you should aim for if you want to reach the highest level in the subject. You don't need to do ALL of these things to improve in Politics - just doing one or two of them will have an impact. Decide on two or three to focus on to improve your skills.