

What does Education for Sustainability have to do with English?

“Narratives shape the way we read and think about the world.”

(http://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/undergraduate/modules/engl1007_narrative_and_culture.page)

English has a critical role to play in helping us to understand, inform and shape our perspective on the world. Topic areas of relevance to sustainability already in the English curriculum include:

- **Understanding other cultures:** expanding understanding of other cultures, beliefs, experiences and foster human empathy; promoting cultural exchange and transfer.
- **Inequality:** class, gender, sexuality, race; representation of equality and inequality within literature, poetry, drama; representation within the industries themselves; equality of access to the arts.
- **Understanding human emotions and behaviours:** understanding how humans relate to each other, as individuals, in society; reconnecting humankind and nature; helping us to understand how to respond to social and environmental injustices.
- **Changing lives:** the joy and personal wellbeing that art and design can bring, through the act of creating as well as through interacting with the created; changing lives and society insight into and sharing of socio-political messages, influencing hearts and minds towards sustainable behaviour; the role of the arts in activism and protest.
- **Representing the world:** the role of literature in showing the world as it is; as a way to maintain or change the status quo; the role of narratives in literature in helping to inform and shape opinions on social, economic, cultural, political, environmental issues.
- **Globalisation:** literature and nationalism; helping to understand the impact of global forces on lives, culture and the environment; how cultural commodities can be a destructive force on lives e.g. in sweatshops.

Key skills for English graduates which sustainability teaching cultivates: interdisciplinary working; innovation and creativity; debate and reasoning; teamwork; leadership; problem-solving; oral and written communication skills; self-management; time-management; analysis and critical thinking.

Find out more: Contact Julia Kendal (j.kendal@soton.ac.uk) for more information including case studies on teaching sustainability in this area.