

Foreign languages and cultures have always been the most fulfilling and exciting area of study for me. I am attracted to German and Russian in particular for the many important contributions these cultures have made to the world of literature, an area of study which I am passionate about. Having studied Russian up to GCSE level, I would have loved to take it further. For me, Russian was extremely intellectually stimulating; I found I always had a stream of questions for my teachers about the complex grammar and it was excitingly different to my previous experience of studying any other European language. I have enjoyed learning Spanish ab initio instead as a second language since its phonetic spelling is similar to both German and Russian and its grammar is arguably less intricate, allowing me to quickly pick it up. However, I have continued my passion for Russian outside of school, as I feel the vast influence of Russia on our world, both historically and culturally, cannot be ignored. Whilst reading a series of articles published by the British Library in their Russian Revolution season, I was fascinated by Katie McElvanney's piece on female Russian revolutionaries, which provided an insight into women's roles in the 1917 revolution and other social movements in Russia at this time. My interest in the position of women in Russian society then led me to read poetry by Marina Tsvetaeva in translation; she often wrote about feeling trapped or limited by her female 'duties'; but also wrote many poems about the revolution which I really enjoyed for their song-like style. I find literature to be the most valuable method of expanding my vocabulary and my cultural awareness. I've particularly enjoyed reading 'Der kaukasische Kreidekreis', as I admire the complex humour and irony in Brecht's writing and the political and social messages he tries to convey through the play. Reading literature in class has built my confidence in my comprehension skills, leading me to read a book of German short stories with parallel translations over summer. My favourite of these was 'Jennifer's Traum' by Marie Luise Kaschnitz, as I recognized the semantic field of oppression and heat created in Kaschnitz's descriptions. The parallel translations included alongside these stories allowed me to broaden my German vocabulary and understand nuances in the translation of the stories for myself. For my 4000 word Extended Essay, I chose to compare a nineteenth century American novel with a translated European play from the same era. This independent project required recognizing the language in 'A Doll's House' as an interpretation of Ibsen's original words, possibly leading to differences in specific connotations or emphasis within sentences. I feel that my EE enhanced my planning and time management skills, and was a valuable experience of writing an extended literature-based research paper. I also appreciate film as a medium for the expression of political or social ideas, and as a method of understanding the values of other cultures. I recently attended a screening of 'Angst essen Seele auf', which I initially found hard to watch due to the open and explicit depiction of a controversial relationship, however I understood this discomfort was a feeling intended for the audience by Fassbinder, asking us to question our own prejudices. Whilst watching the film, I was intrigued by the English subtitles for a migrant character speaking incorrect German, as this situation required subtitles in broken English to convey the character's struggle with the language. Outside of school, I've balanced two part time jobs and have maintained my grades alongside these, showing my organizational abilities and dedication to my studies. I am passionate about Modern Languages and look forward to the opportunities and challenges which a language-based degree course will offer me.