Here is one student’s experience of an interview at Oxford in 2011

“I applied to Lincoln College to study English Language and Literature.

Interview 1:

I was given a sonnet by Milton to prepare for discussion 30 minutes before the interview. We spent most of the interview (which I think lasted for about 25-30 minutes) discussing the text; firstly I was asked to give my impressions of the text and pick out features that interested me, then they asked me additional questions and guided me through aspects they thought were important. I think the idea is that the interview is supposed to resemble a tutorial - it was challenging, and they push you, but they don't expect you to know everything and will help you with things you find difficult. There was only about 5 minutes left at the end for them to ask me questions about my personal statement etc., but they asked me what appealed to me about the course, and also what I read outside of the A level syllabus.

Interview 2:

Again, I was given a text to prepare half an hour beforehand - this time it was prose, and I think it was an extract from an autobiography by Ruskin. We spent half of the interview discussing the text, in a similar fashion to the previous one. They expected a very close analysis of the text, focusing a lot on language. They then asked me questions about things I had talked about in my personal statement, for example, they asked me to compare the work of John Keats and Jane Austen. We also talked about children's literature, as I had mentioned 'Alice in Wonderland' and my EPQ. One of the tutors gave me the essay title 'Alice can be considered an epic hero' and asked me what I made of it. Another area we discussed was the dark nature of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, and whether they can be labelled as children's stories. “