

Preparation for A-Level English Literature



Welcome to English Literature A Level

Introduction

Welcome to A-level Literature! Our course is a wonderful adventure exploring literature across the ages. Throughout the course, you will study plays, novels (prose) and poetry, spanning 500 years, from some of the best writers across history.

This pack contains a mini introduction to all the units that we study at A-level and it is important that you read the specification so you know what you will be learning. You can find the specification by clicking on this link:

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-7711-7712-SP-2015.PDF>

If this link doesn't work, simply search Google for AQA English Literature specification A. This will take you to the AQA website where you will be able to download and read the specification.

Pre-course essential tasks:

We know that you have chosen this course because you love reading and exploring how writers create meaning. You will be studying *Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'* and *F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby'* so you will need to buy a copy of each. If you are going to struggle to do this, please get in touch with Miss Weiner or Mrs Carroll ASAP.

For your pre-course tasks, we would like you to **read BOTH texts, and then write a 400 word review about EACH text**. We would like you to spend time enjoying these texts as well as taking time to explore what you like and dislike about the text. If you don't know how to write a book review, a quick search on Google will really help you. You must **bring your reviews to your first lesson of the course**.

Pre-course optional tasks:

To help you get ready for the rigour of the course, we would suggest that you have a look at some of the following topics. We know you will find these interesting, and they certainly will prepare you for A Level study.

General Preparation and Reading

Academic Writing

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/gothedistance/academicwriting>

The Novel (BBC Radio 4)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p005463z>

Audio Classic Short Stories

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06w4v4x/episodes/player>

Shakespearean Comedy

At A-level, we will read and study *The Taming of the Shrew* as part of our 'Love through the Ages' work.

In preparation, it would be useful to:

Grasp the Genres

Shakespearean Comedy

<https://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/shakespeares-plays/play-types/comedy-plays/>

<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/an-introduction-to-shakespeares-comedy>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSndKGKThHg> (5 mins)

Shakespeare was inspired by Commedia Dell'Arte https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_OTAXWt8hY
(10 mins) <https://www.britannica.com/art/commedia-dellarte>

Understand the Context

Upstart Crow

Philomena Cunk presents a witty 30 minute show on Shakespeare, his life and writing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YeCpHoy9EQ> (30 mins)

In Our Time (BBC Radio 4)

Shakespeare's Life <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00547ct> (45 mins)

Watch or Read another Shakespearean Comedy

Knowledge of other Shakespearean comedies will help you understand the genre and draw parallels with them and *The Taming of the Shrew*. You can also choose to write about one of the below for your coursework.

Much ado about Nothing

Available soon from: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/news/bbc-culture-in-quarantine>

Learning Resources <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/much-ado-about-nothing>

Have knowledge of the different literary periods

Research the following literary periods or groups of poets. Find out the form they usually used, the themes often found in their poems, contextual factors that influenced their writing and key poets. I've included a website or radio programme for each but you can do your research elsewhere if you choose.

Renaissance

<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/love-poetry-in-renaissance-england>

Metaphysical Poets

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00cbqhq> (BBC Radio 4)

Cavalier Poets

<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/cavintro.htm>

The Gothic

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0054792> (BBC Radio 4)

The Romantics

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00546ws> (BBC Radio 4)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p004y24r> (BBC Radio 4)

Listen to programmes about poetry

The Poet Laureate has gone to his Shed

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p085jg48/episodes/downloads>

Poetry Season

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/>

1920s America

We will be studying The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald in our work on 'Love through the Ages'. To prepare, you could:

Research the context of America in 1920s

America in Colour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kjqZwAAUDk>

The Class Ceiling

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000bpvx/novels-that-shaped-our-world-series-1-3-the-class-ceiling>

Southern Gothic

For you're a-level, you will study A Streetcar Named Desire. To prepare, research the genre, context and/or read similar texts.

Genre

[https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-](https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-304)

[304 https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/04/southern-gothic-fiction-harper-lee-go-set-watchmen](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/04/southern-gothic-fiction-harper-lee-go-set-watchmen)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HwvpXvLZQM> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VzRhVLxIGU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDvYbnpTVhs>

Tennessee Williams

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00p8dkb>

Context

Documentary about texts and films set in South America <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00p8dkb>

Dystopian

We will be studying *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. I recommend that you DON'T watch the series and DON'T read the sequel as they make studying the text quite confusing!

To prepare you could research:

Margaret Atwood

The Novel: A Female's World?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000b8mf/novels-that-shaped-our-world-series-1-1-a-womans-place>

Genre: Dystopian Fiction

Why is Dystopian Fiction so Appealing? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csyv0r>

In Our Time: Melvin Bragg on Utopias <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9fz>

Dystopian Watching

Noughts & Crosses

Malorie Blackman's book is more like a teen romance but the new BBC series has turned it into a scarily possible dystopian.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p082w992>

Carol Ann Duffy- Modern Poetry

We will be studying Carol Ann Duffy's 'Feminine Gospels' collection.

Research her life and influences here:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/carol-ann-duffy>

<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/carol-ann-duffy>

Post-1945 Literature

At A-level, you will learn how to approach unseen prose written after 1945. Understanding the context by watching or listening to some of the programmes below and/or reading some of the key texts from the period would help you prepare.

Context of late 20th and early 21st Century Literature

Masculinity in Literature in the 20th Century (BBC Radio 4) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00546lx>

Multiculturalism (BBC Radio 4)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00545hw>

Feminism in the 20th Century (BBC Radio 4) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00545b0>

The Empire Writes Back

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000bhgt/novels-that-shaped-our-world-series-1-2-the-empire-writes><https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000bhgt/novels-that-shaped-our-world-series-1-2-the-empire-writes-backback>