

**A level English**

**Transition Pack**



# A Level English Literature

## Transition Pack

### Welcome!

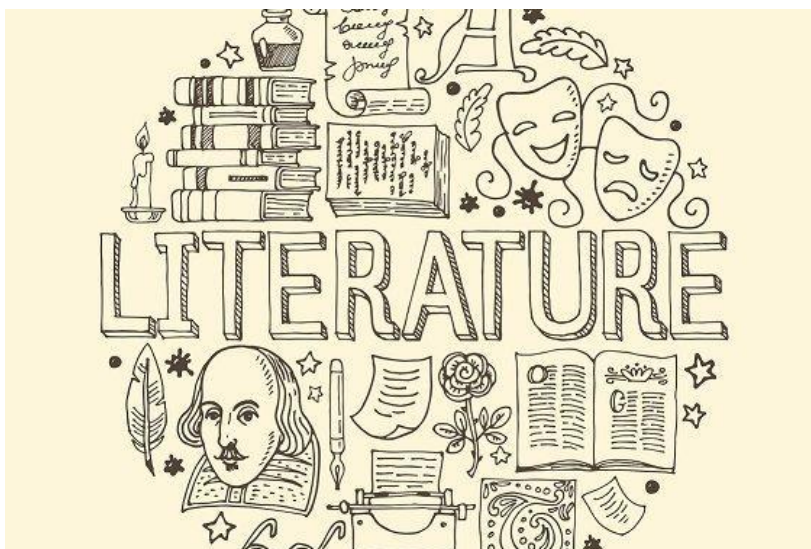
Welcome to A Level English Literature. The step up from GCSE's to Sixth Form courses can seem daunting but don't panic, this transition pack is designed to help you prepare for the course that you are interested in taking in September.

The pack includes an overview of what you will study during the course, should you join it, together with a series of introductory tasks for you to work through. The tasks are designed to help you get to grips with some of the key terms you will need to know, as well as concepts you will learn about as a student of English Literature. There are also lots of opportunities for wider reading and getting to grips with the genres your course will be based around.

In English Literature you have the opportunity to explore both tragedy and crime texts considering their generic conventions and how they fit into the wider genre. You will engage with debates surrounding texts, characters and the genres themselves which will help to develop your criticality and analytical voice. In Year 13 you will also complete coursework and do critical readings of a prose and poetry text.

The course requires students who love reading and literature. Students need to be critical thinkers, developing their own opinions and interpretations of texts. Students should also have good organisation skills and be willing to carry out independent study tasks to enrich the learning which happens in lessons. English Literature is a subject which allows you to understand the human condition, explore and learn about our past, present and how to approach the future. It is also a facilitating subject which provides diverse opportunities for further study and your future careers.

To access the A Level English Literature course in September, you will need to complete the tasks set out in this pack and also meet the course entry requirements, which can be found in the Sixth Form course listing document.



## Texts you will study

In your first term you will complete an introduction to tragedy which will review parts of the work completed as your transition tasks. Following this you will start by studying *The Great Gatsby* written by Scott F. Fitzgerald and William Shakespeare's *King Lear* therefore engaging with both a modern and Shakespearean tragedy. Both are rich texts which follow the tragic hero towards their downfall as they interact with an array of engaging characters and find themselves wrapped up in some familiar situations. Your third tragedy will come in Year 13 when you study William Shakespeare's *Richard II* which is also one of Shakespeare's history plays.

Once you have studied *The Great Gatsby* and *King Lear* you will move into the world of crime with study of crime poetry, unseen crime extracts and Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*. During this time, you will really get to grips with key crime conventions and the big questions which surround the genre of crime. You will see that crime fiction engages with many crimes, types of criminal, victims and often questions your own sense of morality. In Year 13 you will further your study of crime with Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, a classic which offers so many opportunities for mind-blowing debates and questions to be explored.

As previously mentioned, there is also a coursework element to the A Level English Literature course. Towards the end of Year 12 you will study the critical theories which will allow you to do an eco-critical reading of Hardy poetry and a critical reading of a prose text of your choice. During this time, you will produce a first draft of your Hardy piece, make your choice of prose text and start shaping your question.



## English Literature Preparatory Tasks

Please complete each of the tasks set out in the rest of this transition pack and bring your research/essay/ideas with you to the first lesson in September if you join the course.

### Task 1: Tragedy and Crime

Tragedy and crime are huge ideas, and both can be things which are experienced in real life. These big ideas are central to your study of English Literature. To start off let's engage with these ideas and what they mean to you now.

Think about news stories or things that have happened in the world recently that are considered tragedies. What happened? How is this tragic? How do newspapers and the media present tragedy?

Think about high-profile crimes that have happened. What happened? What makes it a crime? How do newspapers and the media present crime?

Try to come up with your own definitions of tragedy and crime and be ready to share and discuss your ideas in lessons!

### Task 2: Glossary

As with all subjects, English Literature will introduce you to lots of key terms, many of which are likely to be new to you. In the table below some of these key terms are listed. Find definitions of each of the terms and create a glossary containing the terms and their meanings.

The glossary you create can be a reference document to be used later, so make sure it is well presented and clearly set out.

ALLEGORY	DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE	METRE
ANTAGONIST	ELEMENTS	MOTIFS
ANTHROPOMOPHIC	ENJAMBEMENT	NARRATIVE
ANTI-HERO	EXCLAMATORY	OMNISCIENT
ARCHAIC	FATE	PATHOS
ASPECTS	FOCALISED NARRATIVE	PERSONIFICATION
ASIDE	FREE INDIRECT SPEECH	PRIMOGENITURE
ATYPICAL	FREE INDIRECT THOUGHT	PRONOUN
AUTODIEGETIC NARRATOR	GENRE	PROSE
BALLAD	HAMARTIA	PROTAGONIST
BATHOS	HETERODIEGETIC NARRATOR	SEMIOTICS
BLANK VERSE	HOMODIEGETIC NARRATOR	SIGNIFICANCE
CATHARSIS	HUBRIS	STICHMOYTHIA
CONTEXT	IAMBIC PENTAMETER	SOLILOQUY
CONVENTIONS	IDEOLOGY	SYMBOLISM
DEBATE	IMPERATIVE	TYPICAL
DECLARATIVE	INRADIEGETIC	
DENOUEMENT	INTERROGATIVE	
DIVINE RIGHT	METAPHOR	

### Task 3: Tragedy tasks

English Literature requires you to be able to apply the aspects of tragedy to texts which you study and explore how they exist within the genre. The following tasks will allow you to research some of these key aspects and begin trying to apply them to different types of texts.

Task 1:

Find out some information on Shakespearean tragedies. You will need to research the following:

*-The tragic hero*

*-The tragic/fatal flaw*

*-The five-part tragic structure*

*-Conflict-external and internal*

*-Elements of the abnormal/supernatural/fate/fortune and chance*

Task 2:

Choose one of Shakespeare's tragedies from the list below (be sure to avoid King Lear) and do research which allows you to apply the elements of Shakespearean tragedy to the play.

Who is the tragic hero?

What tragic flaws do they possess and how are they shown to the audience?

What events occur to fulfil the five-part tragic structure?

How does the tragic hero experience external and internal conflict?

Where are their elements of the abnormal/supernatural/fate/fortune and chance?

You can present your ideas as notes or a mindmap.

Shakespeare's tragedies:

- Antony and Cleopatra
- Coriolanus
- Hamlet
- Julius Caesar
- Macbeth
- Othello
- Romeo and Juliet
- Timon of Athens

There are also a number of Shakespearean tragedies available to watch from the National Theatre here (Again, avoid focusing on King Lear!):

<https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com/education>

You will need the following login details:

**Username: user.oatforge**

**Password: dt123**

Pick one or two to watch and look out for the tragic elements you have researched previously!

Task 3:

Read the poem, 'Death in Leamington Spa' by John Betjeman.

Answer the following question, using quotations to support your ideas: How does Betjeman use language to convey tragedy in the poem?

### **DEATH IN LEAMINGTON**

She died in the upstairs bedroom  
By the light of the ev'ning star  
That shone through the plate glass window  
From over Leamington Spa

Beside her the lonely crochet  
Lay patiently and unstirred,  
But the fingers that would have work'd it  
Were dead as the spoken word.

And Nurse came in with the tea-things  
Breast high 'mid the stands and chairs-  
But Nurse was alone with her own little soul,  
And the things were alone with theirs.

She bolted the big round window,  
She let the blinds unroll,  
She set a match to the mantle,  
She covered the fire with coal.

And "Tea!" she said in a tiny voice  
"Wake up! It's nearly five"  
Oh! Chintzy, chintzy cheeriness,  
Half dead and half alive.

Do you know that the stucco is peeling?  
Do you know that the heart will stop?  
From those yellow Italianate arches  
Do you hear the plaster drop?

Nurse looked at the silent bedstead,  
At the gray, decaying face,  
As the calm of a Leamington ev'ning  
Drifted into the place.

She moved the table of bottles  
Away from the bed to the wall;  
And tiptoeing gently over the stairs  
Turned down the gas in the hall.

*John Betjeman*

To further broaden your appreciation of the genre of tragedy you may also wish to complete some wider reading. Below is a reading list which offers a range of tragedies that span different time periods, cultures and themes.

These texts are not compulsory, but you may find them helpful in widening your understanding of the genre of tragedy.

\* texts with a star are those also featured on this course, but not studied by us

Aristotle- Poetics

Jay Asher- Thirteen Reasons Why

Emily Bronte- Wuthering Heights

Thomas Hardy- Tess of the D'Urbervilles \*

Khaled Hosseini- The Kite Runner/ A Thousand Splendid Suns

Henrik Ibsen- A Doll's House

Kazuo Ishiguro- The Remains of the Day \*

Arthur Miller- Death of a Salesman \*

Audrey Niffenegger- The Time Traveler's Wife

Sylvia Plath- The Bell Jar

Arundhati Roy- The God of Small Things

Jonathan Safran Foer- Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Alice Sebold- The Lovely Bones

William Shakespeare- Othello \*

Mary Shelley- Frankenstein

Tennessee Williams- A Streetcar Named Desire \*

Markus Zusak- The Book Thief

#### Task 4: Crime tasks

English Literature also requires you to be able to explore the elements of crime writing present in texts which you study and explore how these texts exist within the genre of crime writing. The following tasks will allow you to research different types of crime writing and some of the key elements of crime.

Task 1:

Research different types of crime fiction and key elements of crime writing. What different types can you find? What kind of writers would you associate with each type?

You can present your research as notes, a mindmap or timeline.

To further broaden your appreciation of the genre of crime writing you may also wish to complete some wider reading. Below is a reading list which offers a range of crime texts that span different time periods, cultures and themes.

These texts are not compulsory, but you may find them helpful in widening your understanding of the genre of crime.

\* texts with a star are those also featured on this course, but not studied by us

Kate Atkinson – When Will There Be Good News\*

John Buchan – The Thirty-Nine Steps

Raymond Chandler – The Big Sleep

Agatha Christie – Murder on the Orient Express etc.

Charles Dickens – Oliver Twist\*

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – Sherlock Holmes stories

Daphne Du Maurier – Rebecca

Ian Fleming – Casino Royale, James Bond novels

Gillian Flynn – Gone Girl/Sharp Objects/Dark Places

John Grisham – The Client, The Firm, The Street Lawyer, The Runaway Jury

Mark Haddon – The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

Thomas Harris – Red Dragon, The Silence of the Lambs, etc.

Ian McEwan – Enduring Love, The Cement Garden

## Coursework Reading List

In English Literature, alongside your two exams, you will also complete coursework. You will complete one piece of coursework on a prose text and one on a poetry text. The prose text you will choose yourself towards the end of Year 12.

Below is a list of recommended reading for each of the critical theories in the critical anthology you will be studying alongside your choice of text. Although not an exhaustive list, by beginning to read some of the following texts your choice of prose text towards the end of Year 12 should be easier. Please also feel free to do some wider reading that can fit into these topics.

You **cannot** study the following (as they are on the specification): Tess of the D'urbervilles, Emma, Small Island, When Will There be Good News?, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Oliver Twist, The Handmaid's Tale, Harvest, Hard Times, The Kite Runner.



### **Ideas about narrative**

Jane Austen – Pride and Prejudice  
Sebastian Barry – The Secret Scripture  
J.L.Carr – A Month in the Country  
Charles Dickens – Great Expectations  
Sebastian Faulks – Birdsong  
Cormac McCarthy – The Road  
Ian McEwan – A Child in Time  
Ian McEwan – Enduring Love  
David Nicholls – One Day  
Arundhati Roy – The God of Small Things

### **Marxist ways of reading**

Sebastian Barry – The Secret Scripture  
Thomas Hardy - The Mayor of Casterbridge  
L.P.Hartley – The Go-Between  
Aldous Huxley – Brave New World  
Milan Kundera – The Unbearable Lightness of Being  
George Orwell – 1984  
Chuck Palahnuik – Fight Club  
J.D Salinger – The Catcher in the Rye  
John Steinbeck – The Grapes of Wrath  
Mark Twain – Huckleberry Finn  
Anne Tyler – Digging to America

### **Feminist ways of reading**

Margaret Atwood – The Edible Woman  
Angela Carter – The Bloody Chamber  
Charlotte Gilman – Yellow Wallpaper  
Khaled Hosseini – A Thousand Splendid Suns  
Sue Monk Kidd – The Secret Life of Bees  
D.H.Lawrence – Sons and Lovers  
Sylvia Plath – The Bell Jar  
Bram Stoker – Dracula  
Alice Walker – The Colour Purple  
Virginia Woolf – Mrs Dalloway

### **Post-colonial ways of reading**

Chinua Achebe – Things Fall Apart  
Chimanda Ngozi Adichie – Americanah  
Aravind Adiga – Last Man in Tower  
Monica Ali – Brick Lane  
Jane Austen – Mansfield Park

Joyce Carey – Mister Johnson  
Joseph Conrad – Heart of Darkness  
Daniel Defoe – Robinson Crusoe  
Ralph Ellison – Invisible Man  
E.M. Forster – A Passage to India  
Mohsin Hamid – The Reluctant Fundamentalist  
Jhumpa Lahiri – Interpreter of Maladies (short stories)  
Jhumpa Lahiri – The Lowland  
Toni Morrison – Beloved  
Jean Rhys – Wide Sargasso Sea  
NoViolet Bulawayo – We Need New Names  
Salman Rushdie – Midnight’s Children  
Paul Scott – Staying On  
Taiye Selasi – Ghana Must Go  
Zadie Smith – White Teeth  
William Trevor – Fools of Fortune

### Further resources

Exploring events and opportunities linked to your study of English Literature can also be beneficial so look out for free online courses, performances, possible talks or events happening nearby. Shakespeare plays are increasingly being screened at cinemas nationwide and although screenings may not be of a text you study, there could be great benefit from watching Shakespeare’s other tragedies. Engaging in discussion online can also be a way to further extend your ideas and engagement with the texts you study.

Useful websites:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/categories>

Thank you for working through the tasks in this transition pack. Doing so will undoubtedly help you make a good start to the A Level English Literature course.

Please bring all of the work you have completed to your first English Literature lesson. We look forward to seeing you in September and exploring brilliant texts with you.