**English bridging work: Year 11 into Sixth Form**

Welcome to A-level English Literature! Your experience as an English student will be strengthened by reading widely and deeply, across a range of time periods, with a careful eye on the genres, forms and subjects which interest you. Your understanding of all our studied texts will be enhanced by your knowledge of literature; so, to prepare for your A-level study, you should be reading voraciously!

**ESSENTIAL WORK**

* Buy a copy of Shakespeare’s ‘Othello’ (Arden edition) and read it
* Buy a copy of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (Penguin Modern Classics edition) and read it

Both titles are available from Amazon; any good bookshop should be able to order these for you.

These are your **core texts** for Year 12**.** You should read both texts and make notes as you go. We will be starting our lessons assuming that you know the plot and characters of these texts, so this is essential.

The title for the first year of the course is: **Love and Relationships**. This means that you should be aware of how love and relationships have been presented in literature through the ages. One of the assessment objectives (you will become familiar with these soon enough!) wants you to show you can see what is ‘typical’ within the era you are studying.

So, our challenge to you is:

* Read texts which explore love and relationships from any era. We would like you to come out of your comfort zone a little and challenge yourself to read something you would not usually read. So if you usually read Jane Austen, zoom forward a few years and try someone like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie or David Nicholl. **Keep a log of what you have read, complete with succinct notes on key themes and ideas.**
* We would also like you to read texts from the eras of *The Great Gatsby* and of *Othello*. We will also study some poetry from the 19th Century and it will be useful to have explored some of the most prominent texts from this period: you could try *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Bronte or *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy.
* Your study of Shakespeare will be enhanced by at least knowing *about* some of his other plays. This could include watching film or stage versions online. It will be particularly useful to have read, or to have read about, *Much Ado About Nothing, Macbeth* and *Romeo & Juliet*. A general awareness of *Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* will not hurt.
* Any of these texts will complement *The Great Gatsby* and *Othello* for Assessment Objective 4 (AO4).
* As young people it is likely that you will have read far more, and therefore be much more comfortable with, prose fiction (most of your reading throughout your life will have been novels). You will want to balance that overall awareness and confidence with a broad and rich reading of poetry. Luckily, poetry reading is quick and poetry is easy to come by, given that you can access enormous amounts online on sites such as poetryfoundation.org.
* The world of poetry is the most fast-moving and up-to-date corner of literary culture. This means that by using the internet wisely you will be able to keep track of the latest releases and movements in poetry. You will find that there is a very vibrant scene in Britain and the US at the moment. Read widely and diversely, preferably in the area of ‘love’ where possible, and keep a record of what has interested and excited you. You may wish to start with *Surge* by Jay Bernard, *Fleche* by Mary Jean Chan, *Rendang* by Will Harris, *Darling* by Jackie Kay, *Postcolonial Love Poem* by Natalie Diaz, or *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyonce* by Morgan Parker – but this is just a very small sample of that fantastic work that is out there for you to discover.
* For your Year 13 study it will be important to have read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley by September 2025. Equally you will be expected to read *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. This is a long way off now but there’s nothing to stop you adding these to your TBR list now. **You do NOT need to read any core texts for Year 13 yet.**

Effectively you are creating your own reading list by exploring the literary world yourself. Use the internet to look for recommended reading and lists of worthwhile books. Get out there and find new and exciting texts that are relevant to what you will be studying in your first year. **We will be discussing your findings in your first lesson back. So make sure you have something to present/discuss.**

**DEEPENING YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

You should also do the following to deepen your understanding of English Literature

* **Watch plays and film adaptations of texts**. Get yourself a cup of tea and sit down to Shakespeare on film or literary adaptations of some of the texts on your reading list. **Through the school you can now access extensive theatre libraries from the National Theatre Online and Digital Theatre Plus.**
* **Listen to podcasts.** If you have not already discovered the joy of podcasts, now is the time. There are countless hours of fantastic content that you can stream or download and listen to for free. The BBC’s ‘In Our Time’ is a great place to start, with hundreds of programmes on literary concepts, historical events, and individual works of literature, all featuring high-level discussion by academics. Search for Gresham College Lectures online access hour upon hour of excellent material. Search podcasts for Simon Armitage’s Oxford Poetry Lectures and enjoy his insightful and entertaining ideas. ‘Poem Talk’ is another good one, particularly for American Literature. The top Universities also host lectures on all sorts of subjects that you can listen to for free – there really is so much out there to discover. ‘National Theatre Talks’ is good for plays (obviously) especially Shakespeare.
* **Watch high-quality films.** Now is a great time to really investigate those lists of classic films and to push your cinematic boundaries. Cinema is an art form which can rival literature when at its absolute best, and watching ‘old’ classic films from the 20th Century is a good measure of cultural attitudes towards the characters and relationships shown on screen. You could watch the film adaptations of *The Great Gastby* or *Othello*. Having a good grasp of the conventions of romantic comedy (and tragedy) will be useful, from *Clueless* and *The Wedding Singer* to *The Proposal* and *Dirty Dancing*, and you might enjoy films and TV shows such as *Normal People*, *Blue Valentine* and *Promising Young Woman –* all of which come with content warnings so please check out before you watch! There are many excellent film and TV versions of *Pride & Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, Jane Eyre* and many, many more. Top recommendations are the superb recent film versions of *Emma*, *Little Women* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which are well worth watching over the summer.
* **Read Literary Criticism (‘Lit Crit’).** This one is harder to do independently, but literary criticism will form a big part of A-Level study and represents a big jump up from GCSE-level English Lit. If you can, do some initial research into some of the big critical theories, such as feminist theory, postcolonial theory and Marxist theory. Do not worry TOO much about this one but give it a go.
* **Keep up to date with literary news.** It’s a vibrant time in literature at the moment, especially re. poetry and novels. Keep up to date with the latest news and reviews. A few good sources for this are the books section at [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) and the websites [www.electricliterature.com](http://www.electricliterature.com) and [www.lithub.com](http://www.lithub.com) - but there are many others.