

A Level English Literature

Bridging Work for Year 11

Overview of A Level

Your A Level in English Literature aims to develop your expertise in two distinct genres: comedy and crime.

In Year 12, you will study **Aspects of Comedy**, with a particular focus on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* or *The Taming of the Shrew*, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and a selection of comedic poems by writers such as Robert Burns, Philip Larkin and Carol Ann Duffy.

In Year 13, you will study **Elements of Crime**. Core texts can be Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and a selection of poetry by Robert Browning, Oscar Wilde and George Crabbe.

Task 1: A Literary Autobiography

If you are taking English Literature at A Level, we expect you to have a passion for all things literary, just like us! This love might have been formed when you were tiny, with books at home and school, or perhaps you had a key adult who influenced your love of reading.

With that in mind, we ask you to write your own Literary Autobiography, a document of between 400-500 words, reflecting on all of the reading you have done and the texts and writers you have been inspired by. Questions to help you begin your writing could be:

- Which writers do you read and/or admire and why?
- What genres do you enjoy reading?
- Was there a key book which inspired your love of literature?
- How does reading and studying literature make you feel?
- Which books have changed the way you see the world?
- Do you connect any books with particular moments in your life?
- What would life be like in places where certain book titles are banned? For example, *To Kill A Mockingbird* is still banned in several US states.

Task 2: The Importance of Reading

It is vital for you to be reading, both to strengthen your knowledge, but because you are a human being and that is exactly what literature speaks of: human experience.

To that end, find our recommended reading list for you over the summer. You don't have to read everything, but do give some new titles and authors a go:

Reading List

Aspects of Comedy

- *Cold Comfort Farm* – Stella Gibbons
- *Catch 22* – Joseph Heller
- *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* – Douglas Adams
- *Emma* or *Sense and Sensibility* – Jane Austen
- *Slaughterhouse Five* – Kurt Vonnegut
- *Vile Bodies* – Evelyn Waugh

- *Small Island* – Andrea Levy
- *Jeeves Series* – PG Wodehouse

Elements of Crime

- *Cocaine Nights* – JG Ballard
- *Jekyll and Hyde* – RL Stevenson
- *Libra* – Don DeLillo
- *The Big Sleep* – Raymond Chandler
- *The Black Dahlia* – James Elroy
- *The Collector* – John Fowles
- *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* - Agatha Christie
- *The Reader* – Bernhard Schlink
- *The Secret History* – Donna Tartt
- *The Talented Mr Ripley* – Patricia Highsmith

Once you have read one of these texts, prepare a presentation about it. Be prepared to talk about the narrative in detail. Consider the following questions:

- What kind of comedy or crime story is it?
- What does it tell us about humour or about crime and its nature?
- The main characters – how do they react to the comedy or the crime?
- What can you say about the way the story is told? Perspective? Structure? Reader reaction?
- How did the life and times of the writer influence the novel?

Here's the big challenge – you are not permitted to use any IT to present it. No PowerPoints, no Word documents. You can prepare notes on flashcards, but the key here is that in September, or perhaps in a video for your teacher in advance of that, you should be able to talk with passion, interest and enthusiasm about the text that you have read.

Task 3: Being a Literary Critic

Part of the step up to A Level in English Literature is engaging in debate about texts. Using the views and interpretations of other readers, teachers and critics helps you to develop more rounded and contextualised views of literature.

Therefore, please choose an episode of Radio 4's *A Good Read* to listen to at the following website:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006v8jn>

This is one of Radio 4's most long-running programmes, hosted by Harriet Gilbert, where two guests (usually famous figures) are invited on to discuss their favourite book. The other two people read the book in advance of the show and they then discuss it together. Perhaps choose an episode featuring a famous figure you admire. Once you have listened to it, please make a few notes on what the figures said about the texts and whether they agreed with each other's interpretations. What kind of language do they use to put forward their views? How do they describe the texts that they love? How do they handle differences of opinion?

The website also includes a great article on *100 Novels Which Shaped the World*. Definitely worth a read too!

We hope you enjoy these tasks and look forward to you sharing in our love of literature at A Level in September