

ENGLISH LITERATURE



Welcome to the AS and A2 English Literature course. Over the next couple of years you'll find this an exciting, challenging and inspiring programme of study that will give you a great foundation for any future educational route you might want to follow.

In the first few weeks of the course you'll be looking at how literary forms, themes, structure and language should be analysed in order to hit the required assessment objectives; we'll be giving you an idea of the standard and detail required, and how it develops from GCSE. We'll also start thinking about how different critical ideas help you interpret texts in different ways. You'll be expected to contribute your ideas to discussions every lesson, so come prepared!

Things you must do before you start the course in September:

- Buy and read three exam texts: *Hamlet* by Shakespeare (ARDEN edition), *Selected Poems* by Christina Rossetti and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.
- Download/listen to the 'In Our Time' podcast on Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy. Find it at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00l16vp>
- Arrive at your first lesson with the 800-word essay, based on discussions from the taster day session, in response to this question: 'Compare how conflict between genders is presented in the two texts 'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams, scene.4 extract, and 'The Applicant' poem by Sylvia Plath. (There is extra guidance for this overleaf.)

Other things you could do if you're feeling ambitious:

- Read *any* of the other suggested 'wider reading' titles on the reading list
- Research key literary, political and social events in American history from 1880-1940, as background for the examination module.
- Try to go to the theatre as often as you can- get a few people together and make an evening of it! We are spoilt for choice in the West Midlands, being so close to Stratford-upon-Avon as well as the many great theatres in Birmingham, Coventry, Malvern and others. You will be studying a number of plays as the course goes on, so the more experience you have of the theatre, the better!

You're in good company studying English, as you can tell from all the famous names from a broad variety of professions who hold English Degrees. A few examples: actors James Franco, Vin Diesel, Matt Damon, Emma Thompson, Tommy Lee Jones, Paul Newman, Geoffrey Rush; film directors James Cameron, Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese; musicians Sting, Paul Simon, Mark Knopfler, Radiohead's Thom Yorke and Colin Greenwood; writers Douglas Adams, Toni Morrison, Dr Seuss, Stephen King, Joseph Heller. Add to these a wealth of journalists, publishers, producers of TV and radio, politicians and civil servants, and you can see how versatile a subject this is in its adaptability to a range of career possibilities.

Some extra guidance for the holiday pre-course essay task:

- Remember you are being assessed on all of the AOs equally, so make sure you write accurately and fluently (AO1), include some close analysis of language, form and structure (AO2), refer to contexts and how they are reflected in the ideas expressed in the texts (AO3), compare writers' themes and ideas throughout, finding connections between the them (AO4), and engage with different points of view on the texts, arguing against them at times (AO5).
- Ideas for comparative points (AO4): you could look at how both present women subservient to men, but in different ways/ different contexts; you could compare the tones of 'voice' and how these reflect attitudes of the times in which they are set; you could contrast how characters in the drama extract bare presented, and compare with the personas or stereotypes suggested by the poem; contrast how dramatic and poetic structures work to achieve different effects on readers in how gender relationships are conveyed.
- Use the critical view given and argue against it, or suggest other interpretations; feel free to research your own critical views and use them. Ideas for phrasing to help hit AO5: 'It has been suggested by (name of critic) that Plath's poem is (insert "critical opinion"), and while that idea works to an extent because (give your analysis/partial agreement), the poem can also be interpreted as (offer an alternative view and argue the case for it.)' It is fine to use critics' words in your own development of their analytical ideas.
- If you missed the taster session and need more specific pointers on the ideas discussed in the session, ask/email Mr Kirby [tkirby@arden.solihull.sch.uk] who will be happy to provide further prompts.