

Yr11-12 English Literature pre-teaching task: extra guidance

'To what extent does *Hamlet* fit with the traditional concept of the Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy?' 500-750 words

- Familiarise yourself with the plot, e.g. through watching one of the films (the Kenneth Branagh one is good, but might need to be viewed in two sittings; the David Tennant one is also excellent).
- Look at around 3 key scenes: good examples might be 1:5 (when Hamlet speaks to the Ghost), 3:1 ('To be...' soliloquy and his misogynistic rant at Ophelia, a.k.a. the 'nunnery' scene), 3:3 (when Hamlet opts not to kill the praying Claudius), 3:4 (when Hamlet confronts Gertrude about her 'incestuous' relationship with Claudius and kills Polonius) 5:5 (the final catastrophe during/after the fencing match.) The online text is here: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/index.html>. You will need your own copy for the course- the ARDEN edition please.
- Explore how Hamlet's motives for revenge are presented and how the play debates the nobility of such action. Bring in aspects of context discussed in the 'In Our Time'; do quote the critics to support or counter your points of argument.
- Take It Further: make comparisons or cross references to other Elizabethan Revenge Tragedies, e.g. Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* or Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. You could also use your familiarity with *Macbeth* for cross reference: although it does present revenge, it is not a 'Revenge Tragedy' as such...why not? How is it different?

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 a 500-word essay, using quotations, in response to this question:
 'To what extent does *Hamlet* fit with the traditional concept of the Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy?'
(An extra guidance sheet will also be given out for this.)

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.

Suggested reading list for students intending to take English Literature

All English Literature students will be expected to read a wide range of texts as well as studying several with the whole group. The exact texts you will be studying will depend on which teaching group you are in, but below is a non-exhaustive list of texts across different literary forms that give an idea of the range we may cover. You are not expected to read all these titles, but the **required reading** texts are essential as they will be examination texts; the wider reading texts help with contextual understanding and may inspire coursework ideas in year 13. The more you can read, the better, as it will nurture a broad understanding of literary styles and traditions that you can make reference to in class and coursework.

PROSE:

Required reading

The Great Gatsby- F Scott Fitzgerald

Sister Carrie- Theodore Dreiser

Wider reading for the American Literature 1880–1940 module

Gone with the Wind- Margaret Mitchell

Their Eyes Were Watching God- Zora Neale Hurston

The Day of the Locust- Nathaniel West

The Portrait of a Lady-Henry James

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn-Mark Twain

The Age of Innocence- Edith Wharton

The Sound and the Fury- William Faulkner

Native Son- Richard Wright

Beloved- Toni Morrison

The Grapes of Wrath- John Steinbeck

Wider reading in other genres (perhaps to inspire A2 coursework)

The Passion of New Eve- Angela Carter

The Handmaid's Tale- Margaret Atwood

The Collector- John Fowles

The Road- Cormac McCarthy

The Bell Jar- Sylvia Plath

Never Let Me Go- Kazuo Ishiguro

Nineteen Eighty-Four- George Orwell

On Chesil Beach- Ian McEwan

Brave New World- Aldous Huxley

Room- Emma Donoghue

The Book Thief: Marcus Zusak

Fahrenheit 451- Ray Bradbury

Wide Sargasso Sea- Jean Rhys

Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit- Jeanette Winterson

The Monk- Matthew Lewis/ anything by Ann Radcliffe

(these cannot be used for coursework but are useful to understand influences on Rossetti)

DRAMA:

Required reading

Hamlet- Shakespeare

A Streetcar Named Desire- Tennessee Williams

The History Boys– Alan Bennett

A Doll's House- Ibsen

Wider reading

Homecoming- Harold Pinter

Equus- Peter Shaffer

The Glass Menagerie- Tennessee Williams

POETRY:

Required reading

Selected Poems- Christina Rossetti: to include

Song: When I am dead, my dearest • Remember • From the Antique ('It's a weary life, it is, she said') • Echo • Shut Out • In the Round Tower at Jhansi (Indian Mutiny) • A Birthday • Maude Clare • Up-hill • No, thank you, John • Good Friday ('Am I a stone and not a sheep?') • Goblin Market • Twice • Winter: My Secret • Soeur Louise de la Miséricorde

Wider reading

The Feminine Gospels- Carol-Ann Duffy

Ariel- Sylvia Plath

Poems- Elizabeth Barrett- Browning

The Wasteland and other poems- TS Eliot

North- Seamus Heaney

Selected poems- Tony Harrison

Birthday letters- Ted Hughes

NON-FICTION:

American Literature in Context 1865-1929- Philip R. Yanella

Auto/Biographies

Published Diaries, Letters and Journals by any of the featured authors; e.g. Rossetti's Time Flies: A Reading Diary

Exam board and course: OCR English Literature