

WEST COVENTRY ACADEMY

SIXTH FORM



ENGLISH LITERATURE

SUBJECT TRANSITION BOOK

Summer 2024

STUDENT NAME:

Welcome to A Level English Literature!

This booklet has been prepared by English staff to give you key course information and help you make the transition from GCSE to A level English literature. The A level demands much more from you as a student: there is much more independent study required, and you will be expected to read texts that are not on the syllabus in order to gain a deeper understanding of the context or writers that may have influenced the novel you are studying.

The independent learning activities contained in this booklet will ensure that you get off to the best possible start. It is essential that you read this booklet carefully over the summer and complete the independent activities to the very best of your ability. You should submit it to your subject teacher in the very first lesson.

Get into the habit of using your time effectively, organising yourself and your work, and meeting deadlines. Being organised and motivated from the start will ensure that the transition to A level is as smooth as possible. If you do find that you're finding it hard or need support, then your English teacher, form tutor and sixth form team are a great place to start. You have chosen a fantastic A level and we hope that the activities and information in this pack get you thinking and excited about beginning your studies!

A Level Literature Key Staff:

Mrs Dean (Second in English)

Mr Stonehouse (KS5 coordinator for English)

Course Details

Course Title: A-level English Literature (Specification A)

Exam Board: AQA

Course Code: 7712

Exam Board web site: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-a-7711-7712>

Specification Outline: <http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-7711-7712-SP-2015.PDF>

Assessment method: A level is assessed by two summer examinations in year 13 and one extended piece of independent study ('Non-Examined Assessment'). Mark weightings are set out in the above specification document. In year 12 you will have January and summer examinations in addition to in-class assessments.

Minimum requirement:

- Standard GCSE entry requirements for WCA Sixth Form.
- Grade 6 in English language **and** English literature is usually necessary to succeed in this A level.

About the course:

Offering clear progression from GCSE, the English literature A level allows students to build on the skills and knowledge already gained and prepare for their next steps. The A level, however,

requires that students develop the complexity and sophistication of their understanding of the set texts; an enjoyment of reading widely and independently is essential to supporting this development.

The breadth of texts studied is exciting. You will study a wide range of literary texts, including novels, plays and poetry and undertake a variety of assessments, such as passage-based questions, unseen material, single-text questions, multiple-text questions, open- and closed-book questions. The Non-Examined Assessment (coursework) will give you a wonderful opportunity to select your own text for study and craft your own essay question. This range of assessment methods allows students to develop a wide spectrum of skills, such as the ability to read critically, analyse, evaluate and undertake independent research which are valuable for both further study and future employment.

The historical context of the texts is crucial to successful study at A level: from Elizabethan England to war-torn Afghanistan, you will explore a range of socio-historical, cultural and political contexts to enable you to understand the conditions that caused writers to shape their writing in specific ways.

Academic and career pathways

This 'gateway' A level is applicable generically to many careers, apprenticeships and university courses. You will learn and develop a range of transferable skills valued by employers, colleges and universities alike: self-discipline, time management, organisation, analysis, evaluation, comparison, summarising, research, teamwork and self-reliance.

What equipment will be needed for the subject?

- Black/blue pen
- Red pen
- Highlighters
- Pencil & rubber
- Two lever arch files with dividers (one for each half of the course)
- Folder dividers
- Lined paper for notes
- Plastic document wallets

How should I organise my work?

You will need lever-arch folders – which will quickly fill up! For each text you will keep three separate sections, clearly separated using dividers:

- Class notes
- Assessments & feedback
- Notes from independent learning

You must keep your folders neat and up to date; you will be expected to submit your folders for regular inspection throughout year 12 and 13.

What will I study in year 12?

- Autumn 1: Core skills for A Level
- Autumn 2: *The Wipers Times* and *Wilfred Owen Poetry*
- Spring 1 & 2: *Birdsong* & unseen prose
- Summer 1 & 2: *The Kite Runner* & unseen poetry

What set texts do I need to own for A level in year 12?

This year you will need your own copies of the following:

- *The Wipers Times* by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman (Samuel French, ISBN: 9780573113512)
- *Birdsong* by Sebastian Faulks (Vintage edition, ISBN: 1784700037)
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini (Bloomsbury, ISBN: 9781408824856)
- Anthologies of poetry and a range of unseen poems will be provided for you

If you wish, you may pay a refundable deposit of and borrow a copy of each set text for the duration of the course.

What practical books could I read to help me prepare for A level or use as part of my A level studies?

The Art of Fiction by David Lodge

An Introduction to English Poetry by James Fenton

The Poet's Craft by Sandy Brownjohn

How to Read Literature by Terry Eagleton

The Oxford Companion to English Literature edited by Margaret Drabble

Dictionary of Literary Terms published by Oxford or Penguin (both are great)

Transition Assignments

Please complete the following assignments over the summer, ready for the first lesson in September:

Task 1: Contextual Research

- i) Research the writers Ian Hislop and Nick Newman, and prepare a short presentation about them. You should find out:
 - Biographical information
 - Why the writers chose to write about this subject.
- ii) Research the real Wipers Times. All the surviving pages have been digitally archived. Use the internet to find examples of pages from the real trenches satirical newspaper.

Task 2: *Birdsong*

1. Research the life and works of Sebastian Faulks.
2. World War I has inspired many plays, novels, poems, films and TV dramas. Write a short (approximately 500-words) essay about why World War I is such an important and rich period for literature?

Optional challenge: Watch the film *Regeneration* on YouTube. The film is a dramatization of what happened to Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon at Craiglockhart Military Hospital and will give you some excellent historical context for your study of Wilfred Owen's poetry.

Task 3: Historical Research

A developed, sophisticated understanding of historical context is crucial to success in the English literature A level. To begin developing your understanding, create a guide to **ONE** of the key historical periods you will cover on this course. Your guide should explore the writing from your chosen different time period. Include the major writers, ideas of the time, perhaps some short poems or quotations, and be creative! Your guide should cover **ONE** of the following periods:

- Shakespeare and Jacobean theatre
- Romanticism
- Victorian Literature
- Modernism
- Postmodernism

Tips:

- X: follow writers and academics who blog about literature
- Keep a blog or journal about your reading (both for your set texts and wider reading). Your notes can build up to some great revision material!
- Read the set texts as often as possible – the more you can read these texts the better. To be successful in the exams, you need to have read the texts a few times. Try downloading an audiobook version, and reading and listening at the same time.
- Investigate literary theory. Start with feminism and Marxism and explore how they might help our understanding of literature.
- Listen to podcasts or TEDtalks on literature or grammar. Try www.ted.com/topics/literature

Useful Websites:

www.universalteacher.org.uk

This website contains comprehensive and interesting guidance about how best to read and discuss a wide range of texts, both individual and paired. A brief but helpful history of English literature, from Middle English to the late 20th Century, is also included.

www.sparknotes.com

This site has basic, but very useful notes on a huge range of commonly studied texts, with chapter synopses, character analyses, themes and motifs, essay ideas, and suggestions for further reading. It is a very useful site indeed.

www.novelguide.com

The site contains detailed discussion of a wide range of novels old and new, with relevant background material.

www.s-cool.co.uk/topic_index.asp?subject_id=4&d=0

Some quite basic, but very helpful and reassuring advice on how best to approach the study of literature, notes on how to study poetry, and on a few individual texts.

www.shakespearehelp.com

A very detailed listing of resource material on Shakespeare, his life, times and plays, particularly useful for advanced learners.

www.englishbiz.co.uk

A site geared towards pre-A-level learners, but it does contain good and practical advice on planning, organising and writing critical and other sorts of essays.

www.literaryhistory.com

The material here is advanced, but useful and thought-provoking. A wealth of resource material is offered on a huge range of writers, old and modern.

www.victorianweb.org

This site contains very detailed and advanced material – mostly resource-based – on writers from the 19th and very early 20th centuries.