

Year 11-12 Summer Work – Preparing for A Level English Literature

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Course Details

Exam board: AQA (Specification B)

This course requires students to respond to texts from a range of literary genre and historical periods. The course aims to develop the candidate as an informed, independent reader who comes to an understanding of meaning through close study of the literary texts.

Genre study is at the heart of the AQA English Literature B specification. The A-level course focuses on the genres of Tragedy and Social & Political Protest writing. Study of texts within the chosen literary and cultural genres in the examined topic areas is enhanced by the study of critical theory in the non-exam assessment.

The course is examined at the end of Year 13. Students complete two exams and one non-exam assessment, consisting of the creation of an extended 2,500 word comparative essay.

Paper 1: Aspects of Tragedy 2hrs 30, <u>CLOSED BOOK</u> 75 marks, 40% of end mark	Paper 2: Elements of Social Protest Writing 3 hours, <u>OPEN BOOK</u> 75 marks, 40% of end mark
Section A: Othello extract Analysis of the dramatic and tragic aspects of a given text 25 marks	Section A: Unseen social protest extract Analysis of the elements of social and political protest in an unseen extract from a text within the genre. Could be prose/poetry/scripts 25 marks
Section B: Choice of 2 Othello extracts Will be a statement and 'To what extent do you agree' or 'Explore the significance of' 25 marks	Section B: Choice of an essay question from one of your 3 set texts Will be on a specific feature within the studied text 25 marks
Section C: Choice of 2 generic tragedy essay questions on Keats and DOAS Will be a statement and 'To what extent do you agree' or possibly 'Explore the significance of' 25 marks	Section C: Choice of 2 generic social protest aspects on the 2 texts you did NOT choose for section B Will be a statement and 'To what extent do you agree' or possibly 'Explore the significance of' 25 marks
TRAGEDY TEXTS Othello, Death of a Salesman, Keats Poetry	SOCIAL PROTEST TEXTS Kite Runner, Handmaid's Tale, Blake Poetry

Set texts on English A-Level course Mulberry Academy Shoreditch

Tragedy:

1. Shakespeare – *Othello*
2. Arthur Miller – *Death of a Salesman*
3. John Keats' narrative poems – 'Isabella', 'La Belle Dame', 'The Eve of St Agnes', 'Lamia'

Social Protest

4. Khaled Hosseini – *The Kite Runner*
5. Margaret Atwood – *Handmaid's Tale*
6. William Blake's poetry – *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*

All students will also complete a Non-exam assessment (NEA) – 20% of A Level

Study of two texts: one poetry and one prose text, informed by study of the Critical anthology Two essays of 1,250 – 1,500 words, each responding to a different text and linking to a different aspect of the Critical anthology, (narrative theory; feminist theory; Marxist theory; eco-critical theory; postcolonial theory; literary value and the canon.)

Year 11-12 Transition Work

Over the summer, you will read two books related to the topics you will be studying next year, and complete two connected tasks.

You need to bring both tasks to your first English Literature A Level lesson.

Wider reading is an important part of A Level English Literature, and will enable you to analyse the set texts with greater insight.

'Books are sometimes windows, offering views of the world that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.'

Rudine Sims Bishop, 'Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors'



Tasks	What to do
Social and Political Protest – exploring genre	<p>Choose ONE of Social Protest or dystopian social protest texts from the list provided in this pack to read.</p> <p>As you read it, keep in mind the elements of social and political protest and how the author might explore these elements.</p> <p>Record your thoughts and findings in the table provided in the pack. Use the questions to guide you.</p>
Tragedy – the art of the review	<p>Choose ONE of the Tragedy texts from the list provided to read.</p> <p>Write a review of the book once you have read it, using the guidance provided in this pack.</p>

N.B. You can buy books cheaply second hand off Amazon. If for any reason you are unable to purchase two books, email Ms Higgins before the end of term as we have a small number of these books available in school/in the school library and she can help arrange this.

Wider Reading to Prepare for the Course: Into KS5 Reading List

Now that your GCSE study is over, it's time to think about how can you prepare for A-Level. The very best way to do this is reading. Here you will find a list of books that will help you to have a wider understanding of the two genres you will be working through – Tragedy and Social & Political Protest writing.

Tragedy:

- *Homefire* by Kamile Shamsie
 - o *A contemporary reimaging of an ancient tragedy (Sophocles' Antigone) this is a compelling story of loyalties torn apart when love and politics collide. Isma is free, studying in America, but she is consumed by thoughts of her brother, who disappeared in pursuit of his own dream: to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew. When Eamonn enters Isma's life, the fates of these two families become inextricably and devastatingly entwined.*

- *The Great Gatsby* – F. Scott Fitzgerald
 - o *This famous novel, set amidst the riotous 1920s parties of the Jazz Age, can be considered a tragedy in that it revolves around a larger-than-life hero whose pursuit of an impossible goal blinds him to reality and leads to his violent death. The story is about hedonism, socialites, youthful romance, and the quest of a mysterious millionaire to reunite with his former lover.*

- *Norwegian Wood* – Haruki Murakami
 - *Set in 1968 Japan, against the backdrop of a bustling Tokyo and beautiful rural countryside, this novel is a coming-of-age tale of first love, plagued by death at every corner. It is a story of student days in the city, in a world of uneasy friendships, casual sex, passion, loss and desire. Mental health, suicide and grief are key themes in the novel, illustrated through flawed characters.*

- *Never Let Me Go* – Kazuo Ishiguro
 - *In one of the most memorable novels of recent years, Kazuo Ishiguro imagines the lives of a group of students growing up in a darkly skewed version of contemporary England. Narrated by Kathy, now 31, Never Let Me Go hauntingly dramatises her attempts to come to terms with her childhood at the seemingly idyllic Hailsham School, and with the fate that has always awaited her and her closest friends in the wider world. A story of love, friendship and memory, Never Let Me Go is charged throughout with a sense of the fragility of life.*

- *Of Mice and Men* – John Steinbeck
 - *George and Lennie are migrant American labourers –the one alert and protective and the other strong, stupid and potentially dangerous. This is the powerful story of their relationship and their dreams of finding a more stable and less lonely way of life.*

- *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton
 - *First published in 1905, The House of Mirth shocked the New York society it so deftly chronicles, portraying the moral, social and economic restraints on a woman who dared to claim the privileges of marriage without assuming the responsibilities. Lily Bart, beautiful, witty and sophisticated, is accepted by 'old money' and courted by the growing tribe of nouveaux riches. But as she nears thirty, her foothold becomes precarious; a poor girl with expensive tastes, she needs a husband to preserve her social standing, and to maintain her in the luxury she has come to expect. Whilst many have sought her, something - fastidiousness or integrity- prevents her from making a 'suitable' match.*

Social Protest:

- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And The Mountains Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini too
 - *Both also best sellers by Khaled Hosseini, one of the writers we study on the course and which also delve into Afghan culture. The latter focuses on people's individual stories rather than focusing as much on historical events, as the other two novels do.*

- *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali
 - *A captivating read from a debut novelist, Brick Lane brings the immigrant milieu of East London to vibrant life. With great poignancy, Ali illuminates a*

foreign world; her well-developed characters pull readers along on a deeply psychological, almost spiritual journey. Through the eyes of two Bangladeshi sisters—the plain Nazneen and the prettier Hasina—we see the divergent paths of the contemporary descendants of an ancient culture. Hasina elopes to a "love marriage," and young Nazneen, in an arranged marriage, is pledged to a much older man living in London.

- *Small Island* by Andrea Levy

- *Small Island* by bestselling author Andrea Levy won the Orange Prize for Fiction, as well as the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the Whitbread. It is possibly the definitive fictional account of the experiences of the Empire Windrush generation. It is 1948, and England is recovering from a war. But at 21 Nevein Street, London, the conflict has only just begun. Queenie Bligh's neighbours do not approve when she agrees to take in Jamaican lodgers, but Queenie doesn't know when her husband will return, or if he will come back at all. What else can she do? Gilbert Joseph was one of the several thousand Jamaican men who joined the RAF to fight against Hitler. Returning to England as a civilian he finds himself treated very differently. It's desperation that makes him remember a wartime friendship with Queenie and knock at her door. Gilbert's wife Hortense, too, had longed to leave Jamaica and start a better life in England. But when she joins him she is shocked to find London shabby, decrepit, and far from the golden city of her dreams. Even Gilbert is not the man she thought he was...

- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte

- A gothic masterpiece of tempestuous passions and dark secrets, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is edited with an introduction and notes by Stevie Davis in Penguin Classics. Charlotte Bronte tells the story of orphaned Jane Eyre, who grows up in the home of her heartless aunt, enduring loneliness and cruelty. This troubled childhood strengthens Jane's natural independence and spirit - which prove necessary when she finds employment as a governess to the young ward of Byronic, brooding Mr Rochester. As her feelings for Rochester develop, Jane gradually uncovers Thornfield Hall's terrible secret, forcing her to make a choice. Should she stay with Rochester and live with the consequences, or follow her convictions - even if it means leaving the man she loves? A novel of intense power and intrigue, *Jane Eyre* dazzled readers with its passionate depiction of a woman's search for equality and freedom.

- *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

- Tells the story of a young Nigerian woman who emigrates to America to attend university. Meanwhile, her high school boyfriend Obinze ends up an undocumented migrant in Britain.

- *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

- Another bildungsroman, which tells the story of Celie – an African American young woman growing up in rural Georgia – and her survival against the odds.

Social Protest (Dystopian fiction):

- *The Power* by Naomi Alderton
 - *Won the 2017 Bailey's Prize for Women's Fiction. It's set in a world in which women can inflict terrible pain - even death – on men with just a flick of their fingers.*

- *The Children of Men* by PD James
 - *The year is 2021. No child has been born for twenty-five years. The human race faces extinction. So begins *The Children of Men*, P.D. James's dystopian novel of mass infertility and chilling mystery.*

- *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess
 - *Notorious for its nightmare vision of a not-too-distant future in which fifteen-year-old Alex and his three friends rob, rape, torture and murder - for fun - this novel is one of the most controversial novels ever written, which was initially banned on its release.*

- *1984* by George Orwell
 - *Sales of 1984 soared the night that Trump got in, placing the book top of the best-seller's lists for months. It tells the story of Winston Smith, who diligently re-writes history for the Ministry of Truth, whilst inwardly rebelling, all under Big Brother's watchful eye.*

- *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore
 - *An anonymous crusader starts a campaign of terror in a futuristic world where, following a nuclear war, fascism, surveillance and totalitarianism rule England. This masked revolutionary has escaped from a concentration camp and is on a crusade to bring the homophobic, fascist government to the brink. He meets a young woman, Evey, and she becomes his comrade in anarchy*

- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
 - *The novel imagines a futuristic society where the totalitarian World State rules through biotechnology, a rigid social order and endless consumption. The World Controllers have created the ideal society through genetic engineering and brainwashing.*

Social and Political Protest Task – Exploring Genre

1. Choose ONE of Social Protest or dystopian social protest texts from the list provided.
2. As you read it, keep in mind the elements of social and political protest and how the author might explore these elements.
3. Record your thoughts and findings in the table below. Use the questions to guide you.

Elements of Social and Political Protest Writing	How it might apply to the novel you have chosen
<p>Text type itself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it a post-modern novel, science fiction, satire/satirical poetry, historical/political drama, political diatribe?• How might this text type serve to enhance/illuminate the themes of protest focused on by the writer?	
<p>Political settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How often do writers deal with real times and places? How often do they fictionalise real times and places by renaming and/or relocating them?• How often do they deal with completely fictional locations, including dystopias and science fiction?	
<p>The powerful (Kings, tyrants, leaders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which characters have power?• Are they heroic or villainous?• Are they a combination of the two? How do they work?• How do you feel about the way these characters use their power?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far are the powers and authority they wield legitimate? • What are their motivations as leaders? • How do these personal motivations (or the lack of them) affect the ways they work and the ways in which readers might respond to the tales they are involved in? 	
<p>The powerless (servants, slaves, victims)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which characters are powerless? • How far are they nameless and faceless? • Are they considered as individuals or as a mass? Why are they powerless? Do they in fact wield a peculiar power of their own? • Are individuals effectively protected by national institutions, such as the law, the church and other state bodies? • Or are these bodies in themselves sources of oppression? 	
<p>The protestors (rebels, challengers, conspirators)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any evidence of rebellion or resistance or protest? • How is the power the protestors wield different from the power of the characters in the previous section? • Are the protestors a force for 'good' or 'bad'? • What is the source of their power? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are they rebelling against, challenging or conspiring against the powers that be? • Are these protests 'active' or 'passive'? Large or small? Domestic or public? • Are they acting on their own behalf Do they represent some kind of alternative 'power'? • Do they stand up for the oppressed and the powerless? • What alternative kinds of power, structures or society are they looking to put in place? 	
<p>Rebellion and Disorder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What different kinds of rebellion, disorder, confusion and misunderstanding can you identify? • What are characters protesting or speaking out against? • How far are they distressing and/ or violent? • Are the rebellions and disorder literal or figurative? • Could the characters have done anything that would have avoided rebellion and disorder? • Are they in control of their own fate or are they influenced by forces beyond their control? 	
<p>Corruption and conspiracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do individuals, groups of people and 	

<p>institutions conspire against the status quo?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By its very nature conspiracy is secretive, but is it necessarily wrong or bad? • Do conspiracies succeed in this text? 	
<p>Personal as political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does an individual's situation/struggle/plight represent or mirror the wider picture? 	
<p>Gender politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the roles attributed to men and women in your text? • Do men or women tend to have major or lesser roles? • What are the characteristics of males and females in this text? • From whose perspective do we 'see' events in poetry, drama and novels on political and social protest – men's or women's? 	
<p>Social class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do writers use social class? • Do the leaders and the powerful characters tend to be from higher classes or not? • Do the powerless and the rebels tend to be from particular social classes? • Are some social classes totally excluded? • Does this matter? How do more powerful characters 	

<p>demonstrate their dominance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways do less powerful characters manage (or fail to manage) the situations they face? In what ways does this contribute to understanding writing about politics and society?	
<p>Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do the texts you have approached include characters from minority ethnic groups?• If so, why? If not, why might that be?• What roles do characters from minority ethnic groups play?• Why is their ethnicity significant?• Does their ethnicity place them in a position of power or of weakness?• Are such characters treated with dignity or are they perceived as outsiders and threats?	
<p>Right and wrong – good and evil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a clear boundary between right and wrong in this text?• Are there uncomfortable ‘crossovers’ between these moral absolutes?• What kinds of conflict does this create in this text?	

Tragedy task – the art of the review

1. Read one novel from the Tragedy reading list
2. Read three or four reviews of this novel online. Try looking for reviews in online publications such as The Guardian, The Independent, New York Times, Slide AND/OR look at reader reviews on Amazon, Good Reads, Book Riot
3. Think about your personal response to these – is there a style or approach you particularly like?
4. Take a step back and look a bit more clinically. What do each of the reviewers focus on (the story, the characters, underlying themes, personal response)? What approach do they take to writing the review?
5. Read the article from Stylist magazine on how to write a good book review which is in the next part of the pack
6. Consider how the novel links to the Tragedy genre, using the notes about Tragedy in the next pack of the pack
7. Drawing on what you have learnt, write your own review of the novel

The art of the book review

Posted by **Stylist Team** ♦ 10 years ago

Are you an avid reader who always has plenty to say about the last book you read? Then why not consider putting your passion to use by writing book reviews? Helped by two literary experts, we've compiled a handy guide to writing a winning book critique:

Read the book

That's the entire book – not just part of it. This may sound obvious, but you can't write a balanced review unless you've been able to appreciate the book in its entirety.

Don't give too much away

The job of the reviewer is to give a balanced overview of the book whilst holding back enough information so that there's still plenty for the reader to discover themselves. Julie Wheelwright, a lecturer who runs City University London's MA in Creative Writing and

author of *The Fatal Lover*, says that, like the reviews of her favourite critics Jenny Diski and Boyd Tonkin, a well-written review should whet the reader's appetite for the subject of the book.

Dig deeper

Wheelwright stresses that a book review should not simply be a compilation of plot, character and scene. A good book review should go further than this – it should explore themes, and offer analysis of the ways in which (and how successfully) the author has conveyed those themes. Wheelwright advises that you should give the reader enough to understand the critic's comments, and, of course, whether or not the reader should actually buy the book.

Be constructive and creative

Wheelwright says that the best book reviews are those that are measured and constructive in their criticism. Try to balance your review by looking at both the pros and the cons, even if you feel there is more of one than the other. Also, a book review is a personal piece, and is the perfect opportunity to show off your flair, wit and sense of humour in your writing. Alexandra Heminsley, a journalist and *Elle*'s book editor, notes that, in addition to constructive criticism, book reviews should always be entertaining and make you feel as though you're discussing the book with your favourite, smartest friend.

Explain yourself

A book review should go deeper than just outlining your opinions on the book. As Heminsley points out, a quality review should leave you with an understanding of why the book is good or bad, not just that the reviewer thinks it's good or bad.

Fiction vs non-fiction

There are different points to consider based on whether the book you're reviewing is fiction or non-fiction. Wheelwright says that when reviewing fiction, the review should be subjective, and more of a gut reaction to the writing, the story, the character, the plot and writer's originality. If the subject is non-fiction, the review should be a look at the subject and how the author has handled the research, structured the material and whether they've managed to tell a riveting tale.

Get published

Think you've got what it takes to write a good review? Then set about getting your work published, whether in print or online. Investigate local newspapers and magazines and find out if they have a reviews section. If so, enquire whether they accept freelance submissions – it may be that the editor is always on the lookout for avid readers with plenty to say. Alternatively, submit your critique to the reviews section of websites such as

Amazon.co.uk, or use the Living Social Visual Bookshelf app on Facebook – whilst this isn't paid, it's a great way to share your work, and fellow users have the option to rate your review.

The Tragedy Genre

At the core of all the set texts is a tragic hero or heroine who is flawed in some way, who suffers and causes suffering to others and in all texts there is an interplay between what might be seen as villains and victims. Some tragic features will be more in evidence in some texts than in others. The absence of an 'aspect' can be as significant as its presence. There can be no exhaustive list of the 'aspects' of tragedy but areas that can usefully be explored include:

- the type of the tragic text itself, whether it is classical and about public figures or domestic and about representations of ordinary people
- the settings for the tragedy, both places and times
- the journey towards death of the protagonists, their flaws, pride and folly, their blindness and insight, their discovery and learning, their being a mix of good and evil
- the role of the tragic villain or opponent, who directly affects the fortune of the hero, who engages in a contest of power and is partly responsible for the hero's demise
- the presence of fate, how the hero's end is inevitable
- how the behaviour of the hero affects the world around him, creating chaos and affecting the lives of others
- the significance of violence and revenge, humour and moments of happiness
- the structural pattern of the text as it moves through complication to catastrophe, from order to disorder, through climax to resolution, from the prosperity and happiness of the hero to the tragic end
- the use of plots and sub-plots
- the way that language is used to heighten the tragedy
- ultimately how the tragedy affects the audience, acting as a commentary on the real world, moving the audience through pity and fear to an understanding of the human condition.