



Preparing to Study
A Level English Literature
(Edexcel)

Mr Dwyer

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Transition from GCSE to A Level English Literature

"Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart." - Salman Rushdie

Choosing English Literature to study at A Level is a decision that you will not regret if you love literature, love exploring texts and love understanding the workings of a text be it a play, novel or a poem. You simply must have a passion for the subject, a natural inclination to read for pleasure and not just settle for reading the studied texts.

The department has an experienced set of teachers who look forward to taking you on this two year journey. Mr Dwyer, Mr Virdee and Miss Biviano have taught A Level now for many years, each having their own areas of interest and expertise within the course but all united in their professionalism and desire to make the subject as interesting and accessible as possible.

Before September comes around, there are a number of things that you can do to make the transition from GCSE to A Level as smooth as possible. You will find an outline of the course on the English Department area on the main school website. Edexcel has been chosen as the department's exam board and links have been posted to the course specification on the website. Please familiarise yourself with the units of work and the breakdown of the course to give you the bigger picture of the journey you will be taken on.

Included in this booklet is a list of:

- Texts you will study on the course
- Texts that you could read over the summer
- An overview of the two year teaching plan
- Two tasks which we would expect you to have completed for September to allow us to both get to know you better in terms of literary taste and also your ability to analyse an extract from the first novel which you will study

Set texts on the English Literature course

- **Drama** will cover one Shakespearean play and one other drama from the genre of **tragedy**. These texts include:
 - Dr Faustus* (A text) by Christopher Marlowe
 - *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.
- **Prose** will see the study two texts from a chosen theme. The department has chosen to study the theme of **Women and Society**. The chosen texts which the department will study are:
 - *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy
 - A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.
- **Poetry sees the study of a selection of poems by: T.S. Eliot** and pupils will also study poetry from the anthology *Poems of the Decade, post 200 poetry*.

All ISBN numbers for the studied texts are on the school website.

Recommended Reading

It is always a good idea for an A Level pupil to read other works by the authors, poets and playwright which they will study over the coming months. It allows them to understand the style of language and the manner in which novels are told, poems are explored and plays are performed. They can also become familiar with the themes, settings, social, cultural and literary contexts of these writers. This will make the study of the set texts much more enjoyable and accessible.

Below is simply a suggested list of novels, poems and plays which may be of benefit to read:

Thomas Hardy

Far From the Madding Crowd

The Mayor of Casterbridge

The Return of the Native

Khaled Hosseini

The Kite Runner

Sea Prayer

Christopher Marlowe

The Jew of Malta

William Shakespeare

Othello

TS Eliot

Any selection of his poems

Year 12 Teaching Plan 2020-2021

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
	Term 1a weeks	
Term 1a	Introduction and overview of course Induction: Skills required for A Level success Poetry Selected poems from <i>Post 2000</i> <i>specified poetry from the Anthology</i> (study the first 10 poems)	Introduction and overview of course Induction: Skills required for A Level success Prose Context for Tess of d'Urbervilles Tess of d'Urbervilles analysis
	Term 1b weeks	
Term 1b	Poetry continued Unseen poetry Comparative essay writing for the poetry exam question	Prose continued Tess of d'Urbervilles continued
	Term 2a weeks	
Term 2a	Tragedy <i>Tragedy: an introduction</i> <i>Doctor Faustus</i>	Prose A Thousand Splendid Suns
	Term 2b weeks	
Term 2b	Doctor Faustus continued	A Thousand Splendid Suns continued
	Term 3a weeks	
Term 3a	Introduction to Coursework (5 weeks) Poetry Post 2000 specified poetry- complete the study of the post 2000 specified poetry from the Anthology (10 poems)	Introduction to Coursework (5 weeks) Tragedy Hamlet: An introduction to Shakespearian tragedy <i>Hamlet</i> - begin studying the play

	Term 3b weeks	
Term 3b	Poetry continued Coursework 1st draft	Hamlet continued Coursework 1st draft

This is the current teaching plan for Year 12. It is subject to change but this should provide an overview of how the teaching year is set out.

Tasks for the summer

Please complete both tasks.

Task 1

Presenting Your Favourite piece of literature!

You to choose a play, novel, short story or poem that you are interested in, literature that reflects a part of your personality or personal beliefs, a piece of literature that you felt so engrossed in and somehow a connection to.

The department really want to get to know you as a person if you are going to be going on this two year journey with us. What better way to get to know you than to understand what literature you love and what literature inspires you and why! The chosen text must not feature on the current GCSE specifications. You are to make a 3-5 minute (maximum) presentation of 3 PowerPoint slides ready to present to the class during the first lessons back after the summer break.

What do we want to see in the presentation?

We want to see you explore the following areas in your presentation:

- Why have you selected this text- carefully consider your: ideas, thoughts, feelings, opinions?
- Has this text taught you something? Does it have a message that resonates with you?
- Which parts of the text interest you most and why?
- Does the writer/poet/playwright employ any particular techniques which you think are engaging?

- Is there an interesting story surrounding the publication of the text?
- What do you know about the writer/poet/playwright that can help inform a reading of the poem?
- Would anyone read this in a completely different way to you? How might they?
- Is this text typical of the genre in which it belongs? Why/why not?
- Is the text typical of a particular style or movement?

Be creative – you do not have to fill three slides with these questions and your answers! Make your slides engaging and do not simply read from the board – this does not engage your audience.

Why do we want to see this?

We want your choice to reveal something about you – this will help us get to know you. We are all going to be new to each other at the start of Year 12 – so this will help to break the ice.

We also want to see what you are capable of when we leave you to your own devices – show us your very best work. This piece of work will create a first impression on your peers and teachers – with this in mind, please put as much effort into this as possible.

Task 2

Read the passage from Chapter 2, the description of the May Day dancers and the first time the reader is given a description of the character Tess, and answer the questions below:

It was an interesting event to the younger inhabitants of Marlott, though its real interest was not observed by the participators in the ceremony. Its singularity lay less in the retention of a custom of walking in procession and dancing on each anniversary than in the members being solely women. In men's clubs such celebrations were, though expiring, less uncommon; but either the natural shyness of the softer sex, or a sarcastic attitude on the part of male relatives, had denuded such women's clubs as remained (if any other did) of this their glory and consummation. The club of Marlott alone lived to uphold the local Cerealia. It had walked for hundreds of years, and it walked still.

The banded ones were all dressed in white gowns – a gay survival from Old Style days, when cheerfulness and May-time were synonymous – days before the habit of taking long views had reduced emotions to a monotonous average. Their first exhibition of themselves was in a processional march of two and two round the parish. Ideal and real clashed slightly as the sun lit up their figures against the green hedges and creeper-laced house fronts; for, though the whole troop wore white garments, no two whites were alike among them. Some approached pure blanching; some had a bluish pallor; some worn by the older characters (which had possibly lain by folded for many a year) inclined to a cadaverous tint, and to a Georgian style.

In addition to the distinction of the white frock, every woman and girl carried in her right hand a peeled willow-wand, and in her left a bunch of white flowers. The peeling of the former, and the selection of the latter, had been an operation of personal care.

There were a few middle-aged and even elderly women in the train, their silvery-wiry hair

and wrinkled faces, scourged by time and trouble, having almost a grotesque, certainly a pathetic, appearance in such a jaunty situation. In a true view, perhaps, there was more to be gathered and told of each anxious and experienced one, to whom the years were drawing nigh when she should say, 'I have no pleasure in them,' than of her juvenile comrades. But let the elder be passed over here for those under whose bodices the life throbbed quick and warm.

The young girls formed, indeed, the majority of the band, and their heads of luxuriant hair reflected in the sunshine every tone of gold, and black, and brown. Some had beautiful eyes, others a beautiful nose, others a beautiful mouth and figure: few, if any, had all. A difficulty of arranging their lips in this crude exposure to public scrutiny, an inability to balance their heads, and to dissociate self-consciousness from their features, was apparent in them, and showed that they were genuine country girls, unaccustomed to many eyes.

And as each and all of them were warmed without by the sun, so each had a private little sun for her soul to bask in; some dream, some affection, some hobby, at least some remote and distant hope which, though perhaps starving to nothing, still lived on, as hopes will. Thus they were all cheerful, and many of them merry.

They came round by The Pure Drop Inn, and were turning out of the high road to pass through a wicket-gate into the meadows, when one of the women said –

“The Lord-a-Lord! Why, Tess Durbeyfield, if there isn't they father riding home in a carriage!”

A young member of the band turned her head at the exclamation. She was a fine and handsome girl – not handsomer than some others, possibly – but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape. She wore a red ribbon in her hair, and was the only one of the white company who could boast of such a pronounced adornment.

Questions:

1. How are the women in the company of the May-Day celebrations represented in the passage? Remember – the May-Day festival is linked to the pagan Fertility rituals and very much rooted in nature and the natural elements.
2. Hardy uses both colour symbolism and natural symbolism throughout the novel. What colour symbolism is used in the passage and how does this shape the presentation of the women, in particular Tess?
3. What parts of the women's body does Hardy focus on and emphasise, in particular Tess? Why might Hardy draw the reader's attention to these parts of the body?