



Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

Induction English Literature

A Level

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Introduction

Congratulations on choosing to study English Literature at A Level.

You are soon going to be continuing your journey further into the imaginings of some of the most famous, influential and important writers that are and have ever been. Initially, this can seem quite daunting as there is so much, but hopefully this guide will help you with some starting points to ease the transition from GCSEs to A Level.

First steps

First of all, you need to find out what your course will involve and what you may need to do in advance of starting. The best and most effective way of doing this is to speak to your college and, ideally, your teachers and follow any guidance that they give you. However, here is some general advice as well.

A Crash Course in English Literature

If you want to consider why we read and write, this is a quick (quite blistering) synopsis of why we study Literature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSYw502dJNY>

Find out the course and details:

There are many different English Literature courses out there. You should find out exactly which one your college will be following and the texts that they will do. It is useful to look at the websites for the exam board as they have specifications for the course and exam materials, and they often release support materials for students. There are four main exam boards, which are:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)

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

- Pearson Edexcel (**This is our board**)

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-2015.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FSpecification-and-sample-assessments>

- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Exams (OCR)

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce/as-a-level-gce-english-literature-h072-h472-from-2015/>

- Eduqas

<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/english-literature/as-a-level/>

It is useful to know both the exam board and course that you are going to be on, in order to later find out things like exam dates or past papers.

From GCSE to A Level:

Although every school is different, the shift from GCSE to A Level is often based upon the idea of independence. In English Literature the expectations will most likely be that you will take on a greater responsibility for your learning. What this means is that you will be having to come up with your own opinions and ideas about texts, discuss ideas without prompting and complete essays with fewer restrictions on how you approach the question compared with GCSE. You will be expected to complete work independently and quite often in advance of each lesson. You may also be required to deliver things such as short presentations and participate in seminars (discussion and debate based learning).

TED Talks:

You may want to also watch some TED talks on the topic of English Literature found here: https://www.ted.com/playlists/346/the_power_of_fiction_1.

Recommended Reading:

One of the great things about English Literature courses is that they often introduce you to a wide array of amazing authors and texts. There is so much Literature that it can be bewildering to begin with. Instead of providing a comprehensive reading list, we have listed below some key suggestions for starting points of books that you might want to read, to begin gaining knowledge of wider Literature to both help your course and interests. However, there is much more out there. If you want to seek out more, the good news is that it is very easy to do so. Simply do an online search for anything like 'English Literature A Level reading list' and there will be hundreds (if not thousands) of books suggested. For now, here are a few pointers:

- Read the books listed on your course (even the ones you don't have to)
- Read other books by the same authors as the ones that you will be studying
- Read other books within the same genre(s) that you will be studying

General Reading List:

It is impossible to create a fully comprehensive reading list for A Level Literature but here are a few authors and books that regularly crop up as coursework choices or on recommended reading lists:

Fiction:

Author	Book
Achebe, Chinua	Things Fall Apart
Atwood, Margaret	The Handmaid's Tale
Austen, Jane	Pride and Prejudice
Banks, Iain	The Wasp Factory
Barker, Pat	Regeneration

Brontë, Charlotte	Jane Eyre
Brontë, Emily	Wuthering Heights
Burgess, Anthony	A Clockwork Orange
Carter, Angela	The Bloody Chamber
Conrad, Joseph	Heart of Darkness
Dickens, Charles	Great Expectations
Eugenides, Jeffrey	The Virgin Suicides
Faulks, Sebastian	Birdsong
Fitzgerald, F. Scott	The Great Gatsby
Hardy, Thomas	Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Heller, Joseph	Catch 22
Ishiguro, Kazuo	The Remains of the Day
Kesey, Ken	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
McCarthy, Cormac	The Road
McEwan, Ian	Atonement
Mitchell, David	Cloud Atlas
Morrison, Toni	Beloved
Orwell, George	1984
Plath, Sylvia	The Bell Jar
Smith, Zadie	White Teeth
Stoker, Bram	Dracula
Tartt, Donna	The Secret History
Wilde, Oscar	The Picture of Dorian Gray
Woolf, Virginia	Mrs Dalloway

As with the suggestions previously, it is worth looking at other books by the same writers.

Poetry:

Poet	Poems
Blake, William	Songs of Innocence and Experience
Duffy, Carol Ann	Any
Eliot, T.S.	The Wasteland
Heaney, Seamus	Any
Hughes, Ted	Birthday Letters
Keats, John	The Odes
Larkin, Philip	The Whitsun Weddings
Owen, Wilfred	Any
Plath, Sylvia	Any
Wordsworth, William	Any
Various (contemporary)	Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry

Drama:

Playwright	Play
Beckett, Samuel	Waiting for Godot
Miller, Arthur	Death of a Salesman
Pinter, Harold	The Birthday Party
Shakespeare, William	Any
Stoppard, Tom	Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead
Williams, Tennessee	A Streetcar Named Desire
Wilde, Oscar	The Importance of Being Earnest

Essay Writing

One of the biggest fears that many students have is the first assignment or essay that they get. Whilst this is a daunting experience, be assured that you are on a course which will be guiding you on how to improve your writing. No-one is expecting you to write perfectly from day one. Here are a few pointers to help with this:

- Make sure that you have checked exactly what is required of you for the essay itself – details such as if there is a word-count requirement and specifics such as what areas of the text you are focusing on.
- Speak to your teachers – they are there to help and will be able to guide you.
- Plan and prepare – you must give yourself plenty of time to think and to write. Plan out your time and do not leave it until the last minute.
- Review and edit – once you have finished writing you must always give yourself a good amount of time to check through your response for both aspects such as SPAG checking but also checking that you have covered the question properly.

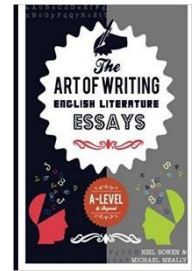
Understand the Assessment Objectives:

Assessment objectives are the different skills that the examiner is going to judge in your work. It is helpful to know what they are from the start of your course in order to gain marks and write successful responses. The actual assessment objectives are more detailed than below but here they are in brief:

A01	Quality of response (interpretation), use of terminology and written expression
A02	Analysis of how meanings are shaped
A03	Contexts
A04	Connections
A05	Different interpretations

The Art of Writing English Literature Essays

This is an excellent book (which is part of a series of excellent books) for honing your essay writing skills. It has a superb section on the idea of writing coherently and cohesively (a difficult skill to master) and is ultimately an excellent reference guide for each and every essay you will write.



Summer Tasks

The best thing that you can do to prepare for English Literature is to read a wide range of good quality books. But beyond reading you can also do these:

Choose a suitably challenging novel, poem (or collection of poetry) or a play (or do all three) to read before your course, and then answer and prepare the following:

1. Take notes of any ideas or techniques that the writer used that interested you.
2. Write a critical review of the text. Here is an example, a review of *The Handmaid's Tale* in *The Guardian*:
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/sep/26/the-handmaids-tale-margaret-atwood>
3. Do a piece of creative writing inspired by the text – this should in some way mimic the style of writing of the author – and write a commentary on how you have achieved this.
4. Read a critical view of the text that you have chosen.
5. Create a short presentation (3–5 minutes), that you can deliver to your class and/or teacher, on the text which covers the basic ideas of the text but also considers it critically.