

Contents:

- I. Introduction
- II. English Language
- III. English Literature
- IV. General Reading List
- V. Essay Writing
- VI. Summer Tasks

Introduction

Congratulations on choosing to study English at A Level.

Whether you have chosen to study Literature, Language or both, you have chosen to study a course that will not only build on the skills you already have but also encourage you to think critically and prepare you for whatever your next steps happen to be.

This booklet is broken down into two key sections covering the key aspects of Literature and Language that you might like to investigate and think about. Each section contains wider reading recommendations, possible research questions and some activities to help you make a strong start in September.

Prepare to think a little differently about the world!

English Language

The most challenging aspect of A Level English Language is getting to grips with the huge amount of terminology that you will be expected to know and use accurately.

Start by creating a working glossary document so that you can collect all the key terms you learn in one place, making it easier to revise in the future.

All of the exam boards offer glossaries of key terms to support you. Regardless of which exam board you are studying, each of the glossaries have useful content so you might want to have a look at all of them:

AQA	http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-7701-7702-GLOSSARY.PDF
Edexcel	https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/English%20Language/2015/teaching-and-learning-materials/GCE_A%20Level_EngLang_frameworks_and_levels_v1.pdf
Eduqas	http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/english-language/as-a-level/Eduqas-A-level-English-Language-gft-from-2015.pdf?language_id=1 from page 118 – page 134
OCR	http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/308613-glossary-of-terms-and-main-language-theories.pdf

Don't be put off by the amount of terminology in these documents – by the end of the course, you will be able to use everything confidently.

English Language covers a wide range of topics and you may find a generic revision guide such as Revision Express useful as a starting point: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Revision-Express-English-Language-Secondary/dp/1408206536/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1528662184&sr=8-1&keywords=revision+express+as+and+a2+english+language

The field of English Language is a wide and varied field of study and, as a result, lots of people like discussing it.

Check out Radio 4's 'Word of Mouth' programme on the BBC iPlayer:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz/episodes/player>.

In this half hourly programme, Michael Rosen discusses various sorts of language from broad areas, such as the use of slang and language linked to gender identity, to more niche areas such as the naming of diseases and clichés in football commentary.

You should also check out this playlist on Ted Talks:

https://www.ted.com/playlists/228/how_language_changes_over_time

For each of the talks, think about the following questions and then choose one of the following topics to investigate:

<p>Txtng is killing language. JK!!!</p>	<p>What are your views on the way that texting (and social media in general) has influenced language?</p> <p>What are the key differences between the way we use language in speech and the way we use it in language?</p> <p>Look at the way the speaker discusses the use of the phrase 'LOL.' How far do you agree with his assertion that the role of 'LOL' has changed?</p> <p>Do you still use this technique?</p> <p>Investigation: What are the key features of the way you use language in text messages and social media? What affects the way you use language in these situations?</p>
<p>Go ahead, make up new words!</p>	<p>How far do you agree with the idea that we are pre-programmed to apply certain grammatical rules such as plurals?</p> <p>According to the talk, what are the different ways of creating new words?</p> <p>Look at the new words that have been added to the <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (google 'new words list' and they will appear). What methods have been used?</p> <p>Investigation: Try to create a new word and see if you can track its usage. Think about the gap you are trying to fill and how you will get the word to spread around different speakers.</p>
<p>How language transformed humanity.</p>	<p>How essential is language to social learning?</p> <p>Pagel presents an argument for a global language. What are your thoughts about creating a single global language? What are the potential benefits of such a situation? What are the potential downsides to this situation?</p> <p>Investigation: Pagel discusses the idea that language is subversive and that there are certain words you cannot say. Discuss the words that are considered 'dangerous' or 'taboo' in modern society. How has this changed over time? Are there words that could be used 50 years ago that are considered inappropriate now? Why has this changed?</p>

<p>What our language habits reveal.</p>	<p>What are the different types of verb that Pinker discusses?</p> <p>Why might speakers choose to use euphemistic or metaphorical phrases for certain events or ideas?</p> <p>Pinker discusses the use of language to create implicature (implying meaning but not saying it directly). In what ways have you used or heard implicature in different settings or situations?</p> <p>Investigation: Look at different political speeches and identify how language has been used to convey or reinforce certain ideologies or values. How do politicians use implicature to affect the audience’s response? What values do they assume their audiences hold?</p>
<p>Don’t kill your language!</p>	<p>This talk is in a different language with subtitles. What were your initial responses to this? Did this make you less likely to want to engage with the talk? What do you think that reveals about the way we respond to different languages?</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that language is an important part of culture?</p> <p>What might make someone give up their native tongue in favour of a different language?</p> <p>Investigation: Research a country that has English as a primary language alongside other national languages – e.g. South Africa, Jamaica or Singapore. How does this country use English? How did English arrive in the country? What effects has English had on the native languages?</p>
<p>What makes a word real?</p>	<p>In your opinion, when should a word be added to the standard dictionary? What criteria do you think it should fulfil before it is added?</p> <p>Do you think any words should be banished? What criteria would a word have to fulfil in order for it to be threatened with ‘banishment’?</p> <p>Can you write a definition of what makes a word real?</p> <p>Investigation: Select three new slang words that you think your English teacher <i>needs</i> to know in order to be able to communicate effectively with your age group. Prepare the dictionary definitions for your words along with examples of them in use.</p> <p>Justify why you have selected these words over any others.</p>
<p>What is a snollygoster?</p>	<p>How important is it that the debates in Parliament are available for people to read?</p> <p>How important are titles for a profession?</p> <p>To what extent do you agree with Forsyth’s view that reality shapes words more than words shape reality?</p> <p>Investigation: Visit https://hansard.parliament.uk/ and look at the ways in which language is used in Parliament. Which elements of language use are particularly interesting?</p>

Recommended Reading List

There are a lot of books written about English Language. Some of the most accessible include:

David Crystal: *The Story of English in 100 Words; How Language Works; The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language* (in fact, most books by this author are accessible and interesting. Have a look in your local library for them.)

Bill Bryson: *Mother Tongue*

There are also some really useful blogs to have a look at:

<https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/> - gives some interesting insights into new words and the changing uses of existing words.

<http://flashfictiononline.com/main/> - useful website for looking at short pieces of creative writing. This will prove useful as you start preparing for coursework.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language> - interesting blog that looks at attitudes towards the ways in which language is used.

Language Scrapbook

The joy about studying English Language is that it is everywhere.


As part of your summer work, start a 'scrapbook' where you collect different examples of language. Annotate the examples looking at how they use language to meet the demands of the different audiences, forms and functions of the text.

For example:

The image shows a train ticket with several annotations in boxes:

- Jargon – language unique to this type of text. Demonstrates the cost of the ticket and implies that it is cheaper than other types.** (Points to 'Off-Peak Single')
- Abbreviations due to limited size of** (Points to '05-Jnr-15')
- Colours are typical of this text type and are the same regardless of the train company.** (Points to the orange background)
- Implied legal language showing the authority of the ticket. Hints at the power behind the people who issue and check tickets.** (Points to 'Not valid for travel via London Terminals')

The ticket itself contains the following text:

Off-Peak Single 


Valid for one journey from
Watford Junction
To
Coventry

From **05-Jnr-15**
Until **05-Jnr-15**

Not valid for travel via London Terminals

This Off-Peak ticket can only be used at certain times, for details ask staff or go to nationalrail.co.uk/9/

Under-16-year-old Standard Class
Refundable and exchangeable for a fee

 **£22.55 M** 12345-1234-1234-00-01-00
1234 56789A

English Literature Progression

Welcome to English Literature! 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
<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 college 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.

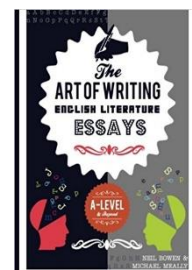
Understand the Assessment Objectives:

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:

AO1	Quality of response (interpretation), use of terminology and written expression
AO2	Analysis of how meanings are shaped
AO3	Contexts
AO4	Connections
AO5	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.

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