

Longley Park Sixth Form Transition Pack

A Level English Literature



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What will I study?

On A Level English Literature you will have the opportunity to read, discuss, analyse and write about a wide range of literary texts from an exciting range of genres across different literary periods. You will develop your critical skills and learn how to present your ideas effectively. You will read widely and independently, engage creatively and apply your knowledge of literary analysis and evaluation in speech and writing. You'll explore the contexts of the texts you're reading and deepen your understanding of the changing traditions of literature in English. The course features a fascinating mix of texts from across the genres.

What can I go on to do?

The critical, analytical and communication skills developed during the course make English Literature an excellent preparation for higher education in any area. If you want to specialise, there are a wide range of courses in English, journalism, media and cultural studies.

What can I do to prepare?

While the most important advice we can give you is to read, knowing where to start might be a bit daunting.

Why not have a look at some of the websites below as a good starting point...

<https://thebookerprizes.com/fiction/2020>

www.poetryfoundation.org

<https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature>

Drama

The activities below are designed to get you thinking about the drama unit within A Level English Literature.

Activity 1

Let's begin with your experiences of drama so far...

We want to know which plays you've studied at school, and what you thought about them. Which moments from these plays stand out in your memory? Which characters did you love, hate, or love to hate?

At school, we studied...

The most memorable aspect of this play was...

If you've experienced going to the theatre, tell us about it. Which theatre(s) have you been to? Which play(s) have you watched? How would you describe the experience?

I have visited _____ to watch...

I would describe this experience as...

If you haven't been to the theatre yet, is there a play you would like to watch? Or a theatre you would like to visit?

I haven't been to the theatre yet.

I would love to watch...

I would love to visit...

Activity 2

Next, we want you to think about the role of drama within our society: Watch the videos below, and share your thoughts:

https://www.ted.com/talks/oskar_eustis_why_theater_is_essential_to_democracy#t-769687

Oskar Eustis states that theatre is about social participation. As a form, drama allows us to experience new perspectives. This enables us to build our capacity for empathy.

Think back to your own experiences of watching / studying drama. Were there moments when you were encouraged to see an experience from a particular point of view?

In the play _____ , you are encouraged to see things from _____ 's perspective when...



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This enables you to appreciate that...

https://www.ted.com/talks/adong_judith_how_i_use_art_to_bridge_misunderstanding#t-286799

Adong Judith states that as an art, theatre can be used to bridge understanding. It can help us to see another person's truth, even if that truth is very different to our own.

Has a drama text ever allowed you to experience something far removed from your own daily reality? Has a drama text ever challenged your own views / perspectives?
Share your ideas.

I am going to discuss...

This text enabled me to experience...

It helped me to appreciate...

Activity 3

Watch a play online!

There are lots of plays being shared / streamed for free online.

What's On Stage regularly share information about free plays being aired online:

https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/stage-shows-musicals-opera-free-stream-online_51198.html

You can even sign up for a free newsletter so you're never in danger of missing out on a great free performance:

<https://www.whatsonstage.com/newsletter/signup>

Pick a performance that appeals to you, get your snacks at the ready and enjoy!

Prose

The second unit of the A Level English Literature course is all about **prose** – how writers present themes, ideas, feelings, characters and events in their stories.

In this part of your bridging unit we are going to focus on how the ‘novel’ gives us a unique insight into a character’s perspective.

Have you ever read a book that has made you think differently about something? Tell us all about it here!

When did it all begin?

Most critics see the genre as dating back to the early 18th Century and point to the publication of Robinson Crusoe as the starting point of the novel as a literary form. Robinson Crusoe (by Daniel Defoe) tells the story of a young man who is shipwrecked on an island off the coast of South America. This article from the British Library explores how the art form developed from the publication of Robinson Crusoe in 1719.

<https://www.bl.uk/restoration-18th-century-literature/articles/the-rise-of-the-novel>

What was so different about the novel?

What made prose fiction, or the ‘novel’ as it came to be known, different to other forms of story- telling was the use of the single narrator and the detailed account of their story.

How do you study a novel?

On the A Level English Literature course you will get the chance to study lots of different types of novels, including Dystopian fiction, the Gothic, Victorian novels and modern novels. However, the first point of analysis is always the same – *from whose perspective is the story being told?*

Getting started...

One of the most popular novels we look at is John Fowles' *The Collector*. Here's an extract from the start of the novel for you to have a read through. This extract is told from the perspective of a young man named Clegg.

'When she was home from her boarding-school I used to see her almost every day sometimes, because their house was right opposite the Town Hall Annexe. She and her younger sister used to go in and out a lot, often with young men, which of course I didn't like. When I had a free moment from the files and ledgers I stood by the window and used to look down over the road over the frosting and sometimes I'd see her. In the evening I marked it in my observations diary, at first with X, and then when I knew her name with M. I saw her several times outside too. I stood right behind her once in a queue at the public library down Crossfield Street. She didn't look once at me, but I watched the back of her head and her hair in a long pigtail. It was very pale, silky, like burnet cocoons. All in one pigtail coming down almost to her waist, sometimes in front, sometimes at the back. Sometimes she wore it up. Only once, before she came to be my guest here, did I have the privilege to see her with it loose, and it took my breath away it was so beautiful, like a mermaid.'

When you have read the extract a couple of times have a think about the following questions, annotate the extract and note down your thoughts. We'll talk through your ideas in class!

- What do we learn about Clegg?
- What do you think is happening?
- Are there any details that make you think something sinister is going on?
- What details might hint at (foreshadow) further events?

What else can I read?

We'd love to know what you like to read and we are also keen that you challenge yourself to read things you wouldn't normally choose – this really helps to develop your critical skills. Why not try listening to one of these podcasts for some more ideas?

The Penguin Podcast; The Waterstone's Podcast; Radio 4 Bookclub.

Whatever you do this summer, make some time for reading. It will help you to develop your skills as a literary analyst and prepare you for the demands of A Level Literary study!

Poetry

Poetry is...

"the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" – William Wordsworth

"a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable" – Carl Sandburg

"a state of free float" – Margaret Atwood

"a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary" – Khalil Gibran

"the compression of an idea" – Patience Agbabi

Which of these do you like or agree with? Why? Explain which metaphor grabs you below. Then see if you can create your own metaphor to capture what poetry is!

- **The metaphor that grabs me is the one by _____ because...**
- **Poetry is...**

Okay, here are three poems for you to read. Which one do you like best? Why? What do you think these poems are about? What kind of feelings and moods is the **speaker** expressing? What did the poet want to achieve with this poem? Who is the poet and what is the poem's

form? You may want to read the poem, let it ‘brew’ in your mind, come back and read it again. If we were sitting in a classroom and were about to discuss one of these poems, what would you say about it?

1

A lovely spring night
suddenly vanished while we
viewed cherry blossoms

Basho

2

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!
Give back my book and take my kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard,
“What a big book for such a little head!”
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink!
Oh, I shall love you still, and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more:
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.

Edna St Vincent Millay

3

of course i want to be successful
but i don't crave success for me
i need to be successful to gain
enough milk and honey
to help those around
me succeed

Rupi Kaur

Form: 1 haiku

2 sonnet

3 free verse

Now, have a go at finding a poem for yourself. It could be anything! Something very modern, something written a long time ago; something short, something a bit longer. Here are some good websites:

www.poetryfoundation.org

www.theguardian.com/books/series/saturdaypoem

www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/online-poetry/poems

Once you've settled on a poem, put the link to it here. Why did you choose this poem? What was it about it that caught your eye? Why do you like it?

Next, try some exploratory writing. At A Level you'll be analysing texts with specific assessment objectives- but we'll come on to that later. For now, just write about one poem (one of the three from earlier on, or one you've chosen) in your own words, in whatever way you like. Explore it, explain it, tell us what you think of it.

Finally, have a go at writing a poem! This can be – again - anything. Express yourself! If you're stuck for ideas, use one of the poems you've read so far as a starting point. So, write a haiku or a sonnet or some free verse. Write about cherry blossom, strong feelings for someone or something, something that captures an idea about success, desire, fear- anything! Share it with us here, or keep it locked away until you're ready to share it – either is fine.

That's it! Happy poetrying. We're looking forward to seeing your ideas, and to meeting you in the autumn!



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