

***ENGLISH LITERATURE A - LEVEL***

Dear Year 11 Students,

If you are thinking about studying English Literature or loved studying it at GCSE, the attached tasks will enable you keep up your studies in preparation for A Level. Our goals in the Sixth Form in the English Faculty are to provide an engaging, enriching and academic curriculum for you, and we aim for you to become lively, focused and independent learners. We hope that during the time that you are spending at home over the next few weeks, you can begin to think of yourself as an A Level Literature student, and also begin to develop your academic progress in English.

I am attaching a list of tasks that we would like you to get on with over the coming weeks. Complete the work at your own pace and if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me or your Year 11 English teacher.

We are pleased to be supporting your continued study of English Literature and welcoming you to English A-Level.

Best Wishes,

Mrs Sykes

 (In Charge of Key Stage 5 English)

***ENGLISH LITERATURE A-Level: Foundation Tasks***

***Reading:***

1. We expect you to be reading widely throughout the course, and now is the perfect time to begin. We expect you to have **read at least 5 of the books from either of the attached lists** before you start the course in September. Attached are two reading lists – one is a **general suggested reading list** which includes a range of texts that we are suggesting you explore.
2. The second reading list is for your **Project Task.** Choose **one book** from ‘Love Through the Ages’ and **one book** from ‘Modern Times’ and complete a book profile on **each of them.** (These can be included in your 5 books).

Book Profile Prompts:

* What drew you to this text?
* When and where is the text set? Does it have multiple settings? What is the significance of the setting?
* What are the themes of the text?
* Why is the social context of the text important? What is the writer trying to say about society and the world around them through the themes and setting?
* What about characterisation – how and why are characters constructed?
* How is the text structured and what does this add? Chronological? Climax? Fragmented?
* Language – choose your favourite short passage from the text and explore how the writer has used language in this section to convey ideas or create effects. You can annotate it or write a paragraph about it.

You can be as imaginative as you like in your presentation of these.

***Shakespeare:***

1. In Year 13 you will study the Shakespearian tragedy, *Othello.* Read through the attached **critical article** by Andrew Dickson about ways to study Shakespeare at Key Stage 5. Watch any version of any Shakespeare play, on screen or stage.
2. The article includes plenty of suggestions about how to engage with Shakespeare so please use this as a starting point. We would also like you to work through the Shakespeare tasks below:
* **RSC Website** (Royal Shakespeare Company). <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/> Head to this section of the website and spend some time exploring Othello, and any other play that you are interested in. There are many video clips of actors performing and staging the plays, and sections on context and Shakespeare’s language.
* **BBC SOUNDS.** This is an APP that you need to download on your phone. Once downloaded search for the following programmes and have a listen: 1) Shakespeare: Love Across Race – There is an episode on Othello but you can listen to others too.

2) The Shakespeare Sessions : A Midsummer Night’s Dream – It’s the whole play, (one of my favourites) so please listen to it in it’s entirety.

* Read this article: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-36114485>
* **Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre**: <https://globeplayer.tv/shakespearelives> Watch these short films on the globeplayer website. There is loads more content there too but you have to pay.

***Close Reading:***

Attached are two extracts from novels.

**Extract 1 – From ‘The Constant Gardener’ by John Le Carre**

**Extract 2 – From ‘Bleak House’ by Charles Dickens**

Read the extracts and produce a close reading of them both. The close reading should be a written response to the extracts in which you provide the following things:

* A clear interpretation of the text where you show understanding about what is happening.
* Comments on the literary and linguistic techniques that the writers have used and their effects.
* Comments on any other significant features of the text such as context and setting and how it is presented, and characterisation.

There is no right or wrong way of interpreting these texts or structuring your response. The aim of this exercise is for you to respond independently and begin writing in a critical way about texts.

***Poetry***

At the end of the attachments there is a lovely poetry task to complete.

***Reading Lists:***

**General Suggested Reading List:**

Thomas Hardy *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*

Anne Bronte *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

Wilkie Collins *The Moonstone, The Woman in White*

Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*

HG Wells *The War of the Worlds*

Virginia Woolf *Orlando, Mrs Dalloway*

Bram Stoker *Dracula*

Aldous Huxley *A Brave New World*

George Orwell *1984*

Anthony Burgess *A Clockwork Orange*

Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar*

Vladimir Nabakov *Lolita*

Angela Carter *The Bloody Chamber, The Magic Toyshop*

Iain Banks *The Wasp Factory*

Patrick Suskind *Perfume*

Tracey Chavalier *The Girl With The Pearl Earring*

Chuck Palahniuk *Fight Club*

Donna Tartt *The Goldfinch*

Graham Greene *Brighton Rock*

Audrey Niffenegger *Her Fearful Symmetry*

D H Lawrence *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*

Khaled Hosseini The Kite Runner

Albert Camus *The Outsider*

John Banville *The Sea*

Lionel Shriver *We Need to Talk About Kevin*

Ian McEwan *Enduring Love*

Angela Ashworth *Once In A House On Fire*

**Reading List for your Project Task:**

**‘Love Through the Ages’**

**Prose**

Jane Austen *Persuasion* Pre-1900

Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre* Pre-1900

Emily Brontë *Wuthering Heights* Pre-1900

Kate Chopin *The Awakening* Pre-1900

Thomas Hardy *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* Pre-1900

E.M. Forster *A Room with a View*

L.P. Hartley *The Go-Between*

Daphne Du Maurier *Rebecca*

Ian McEwan *Atonement*

**Shakespeare**

*The Taming of the Shrew*

*Measure for Measure*

 *The Winter’s Tale*

**‘Modern times’**

**Prose Texts**

Michael Frayn *Spies* (post-2000)

Ken Kesey *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*

Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things*

Kathryn Stockett *The Help* (post-2000)

Alice Walker *The Color Purple*

Jeanette Winterson *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*

Richard Yates *Revolutionary Road*

Graham Swift *Waterland*

**Drama Texts**

Caryl Churchill *Top Girls*

Brian Friel *Translations*

Arthur Miller *All My Sons*

Timberlake Wertenbaker *Our Country’s Good*

Tennessee Williams *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

A rough guide to Shakespeare

Andrew Dickson is the author of a recently published Rough Guide to Shakespeare. Here he offers some ideas for spicing up your study of the Bard.

If you believe his plays, Shakespeare didn't think much of schools. They crop up in some weird places: an entire scene in the comedy The Merry Wives of Windsor takes place in a schoolroom, as an increasingly flustered child - knowingly christened William - is put through his paces at some brain-numbing Latin grammar. The early history play King Henry VI Part II is sharper, and harsher: the leader of a riotous Kentish rebellion against the King, one Jack Cade, bags a royalist prisoner and sentences him to death on the basis that 'he has...corrupted the youth of the realm' by founding - you're probably there already - a school. And, of course, there's the typically Eeyore-ish opinion of Jaques in As You Like It, who describes how we '[creep] like snail/Unwillingly to school'. One to ponder as you linger haggardly over your morning cuppa.

All of which makes it somewhat ironic that Shakespeare is about as established in the school curriculum as it gets - so much so that whenever anyone suggests studying him less, hands begin wringing and cries of dumbing down fly up. 'Doing' Shakespeare up to GCSE, it sometimes seems, is like applying for a passport or taking the driving theory test: a ritual you have to go through - painful, protracted, but necessary. It's the default option. Macbeth? Tick. Twelfth Night? Check.
But it doesn't have to be so. A Level is the time to shake things up a little. You're free at last of GCSE-shaped shackles, liberated to study what you want, when you want, how you want. So here are a few suggestions - a Rough Guide, if you will - on how to spice up your relationship with Shakespeare, rinse out the starch and add a little sparkle. You'll be glad you did.

1. The first thing to do is bin those books (temporarily at least), peel yourself off your desk and get down to the theatre. It doesn't need to be a professional or world-class place - any space will do. Thousands of performances happen in the UK each year, and it's almost certain that someone, somehow will be doing some form of Shakespeare nearby. National companies such as the RSC (www.rsc.org.uk) regularly tour, performing in leisure centres as well as historic theatres; smaller troupes traipse up and down the land, playing in everything from disused warehouses to rural scout halls. Amateur organisations, too, put on Shakespeare with reliable frequency - and, even if you can't find any, who's afraid of a spot of DIY? The best way to get on with a play, any play, is to get inside it.

2. Get on speaking terms with the Bard. It's often claimed that Shakespearian language is hard work: closer to the truth is that in performance it often isn't - all it takes is an actor who knows what s/he is doing. But the words that Shakespeare was using are four centuries old, and he had a wide and restless vocabulary. (Did you know that he coined words as varied as 'amazement', 'priceless' and 'zany'? Dangerous to play Scrabble for cash against a man like that.) You need to sharpen your eyes and ears, and the best way to do that is to get hold of a decent version of the text(s) you're studying. Relying on that dog-eared, car-boot-sale copy of Hamlet could leave you fumbling in the dark. (Some abridged editions don't even include the full script - they've been edited to clean up the language, which, given that Shakespeare is often gloriously foul-mouthed, means you'll be missing a lot.)

A good edition of a play or poem, on the other hand, will have detailed notes explaining what individual words and phrases mean, as well as guidance on where they come from. It should also have some information on different critical approaches, a history of performance, and some suggestions for further reading. The editions I recommend in The Rough Guide are all great: I include a brief review saying why I think they're great. But it's worth shopping around, not least because new texts are published all the time. A good edition will open new doors; one that doesn't answer your questions, or encourage you to ask more, will only get in your way. At six or seven quid a pop, less than the price of a prime-time cinema ticket, this is the best investment you can make. (See page 17 for more details.)

3. Now you want to introduce a bit of variety, to road-test some fresh ideas. One thing you realise after seeing a play in the flesh is that it's never the same: every performance will change, just as every person in every audience will see something new. So the more exposure you have to different permutations of a text, the better. As well as getting to live performances, try and watch different adaptations of the plays on video or listen to them on audio: The Rough Guide reviews the cream of the crop, nearly all of which can be bought or rented from online stores such as Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk) or LoveFilm (www.moviemail-online.co.uk). Just watch, for instance, a teenage Leo DiCaprio and Claire Danes simper to the strains of Des'Ree in the sexy, futuristic Romeo + Juliet (1996), then compare that to the archly conservative movie of the same play made in the 1930s, and starring ageing Hollywood icons Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer (aged 44 and 36 respectively). It's an object lesson in how variously Shakespeare can be interpreted, and it's captivating how different the results can be. Even woeful versions - Calista Flockhart in A Midsummer Night's Dream, anyone? - are worth catching. Is acting King Lear swathed in cling-film while riding a unicycle a valid approach to take, or should we stick to doublet and ruff? You be the judge.

4. Another good idea is to read what other people have to say. It's an odd thing that in English we tend to use the word 'critic' negatively, but Shakespearian critics, while a pretty odd bunch, are good company. Letts guides and Cliffs Notes are useful as far as they go, but if you're thinking about a play or poem in detail you'll also want access to some swashbucklingly conflicting interpretations: what the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge thought about Macbeth differs absolutely from what his predecessor, the sternly moralistic dictionary-maker Samuel Johnson, argued - which is different again from what the brilliant American critic Janet Adelman has recently written about (she's interested in the role of all-powerful mothers in the play). So it goes on. Is Hamlet a tragedy about revenge, hesitancy, Catholicism, life, death, mother-son incest, or even a tragedy at all? You decide. Nor do you need to have a university library on your doorstep: anthologies of criticism are cheaply available (your school or college may already have some) and you can cull plenty of different opinions for free from the Internet.

5. It also can't hurt to find out more about Shakespeare's life. Did you know that he married at 18, but spent most of his career living away from his wife? That his greatest living success wasn't a play at all, but a now-little-known erotic poem called Venus and Adonis? That William Shakespeare was in fact Elizabeth I? (You might think I invented this last fact, but one lunatic fringe holds it to be true.)

6. And speaking of the poems, why don't you read a bit more Shakespeare while you're at it? None of the works exists in a vacuum; and if you stick rigidly to the set texts, Shakespeare won't be anyone other than someone to tussle with in coursework or exams. Read or see other plays - teachers or tutors will offer suggestions - and your horizons will expand exponentially. Did you know that the comic A Midsummer Night's Dream and the tragedy Romeo and Juliet were written almost at the same time, and share an astonishing number of ideas? That Shakespeare's very last play to be written, The Two Noble Kinsmen, is in many ways a sour, dark-edged rerun of his first, The Two Gentlemen of Verona? That Shakespeare's Sonnets are probably the greatest, most seductive love poems of all time - and almost entirely addressed by a man to a man?

7. One last suggestion. Whatever you do, stick up for yourself. Don't let anyone (least of all loudmouths like me) bully you into thinking what you don't feel to be true. Be open-minded, but trust your instincts: if something doesn't seem right and you can figure out why, that's enough. The greatest thing about studying literature is that it's a living, breathing organism. There aren't any final answers, only as many questions as you dare to ask. Ignore what I have to say, in other words, and you'll have it just about right.

Get started: a taster

Editions

There are many different versions of individual works available - so many that choosing among them can be baffling. To add to the complexity, no one series is uniformly recommendable. But as a general rule, there are three brands to look up first: the Oxford Shakespeare (published by Oxford University Press), the New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press) and Arden 3 (so called because it's the third series to appear under the Arden title; published by Thomson). Each of these offers reliable and well-edited texts, detailed notes, stage histories and up-to-date suggestions for reading - choose whichever you find most helpful. Among other series, the American Signet Shakespeare has some strong editions, while the British New Penguin Shakespeare has recently been overhauled with new introductions and stage histories (the texts themselves remain untouched, which is a shame).

General guides

The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare (Oxford University Press, 2001) is difficult to beat if you're after a comprehensive A-Z, and has just been reissued in paperback. Its varsity rival The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 2001) is in short-essay format and primarily aimed at undergrads, but has plenty to offer for other readers too. If you're after something more discursive, Stanley Wells's Shakespeare: The poet and his plays (Methuen, rev. 1997) is a terrific and very readable introduction that looks at the works in the order in which they were written. And as far as biogs go, Park Honan's Shakespeare: A Life (Oxford University Press, 1998) is probably the most complete, though don't be fooled by the dry title of Samuel Schoenbaum's William Shakespeare: A compact documentary life (Oxford University Press, rev. 1987) - it's a sprightly read, enlivened by Schoenbaum's pointed sense of humour.

Websites

Gateways such as Mr William Shakespeare and the Internet (www.shakespeare.palomar.edu) and Internet Shakespeare Editions (www.ise.uvic.ca) are a great place to start: they'll provide enough Shakespeariana to keep you busy until your eyes fall out. If you're looking for a good online text, head over to Open Source Shakespeare (www.opensourceshakespeare.com) - the best of the current crop. Or if you're after something specifically educational, About Shakespeare (www.shakespeare.about.com) and Shake Sphere (http://cummingsstudyguides.net) both provide plenty of pointers, which you could underpin by visiting the - slightly lunatic - discussion group SHAKSPER (www.shaksper.net), the archives of which are freely searchable. By this time you'll be desperate for a bit of light relief: how about downloading the Sonnets onto your iPod (www.westering.com/ipod) or reading the works in the original Klingon (http://www.kli.org/stuff/Hamlet.html)?

Many more ideas and suggestions for websites and further reading are included in The Rough Guide to Shakespeare.

***The Constant Gardener***

***John Le Carre***

***Chapter 1***

The news hit the British High Commission in Nairobi at nine-thirty on a Monday morning. Sandy Woodrow took it like a bullet, jaw rigid, chest out, smack through his divided English heart. He was standing. That much he afterwards remembered. He was standing and the internal phone was piping. He was reaching for something, he heard the piping so he checked himself in order to stretch down and fish the receiver off the desk and say, *"Woodrow."* Or maybe, *"Woodrow here."* And he certainly barked his name a bit, he had that memory for sure, of his voice sounding like someone else's, and sounding stroppy: "Woodrow here," his own perfectly decent name, but without the softening of his nickname Sandy, and snapped out as if he hated it, because the High Commissioner's usual prayer meeting was slated to start in thirty minutes prompt, with Woodrow, as Head of Chancery, playing in-house moderator to a bunch of special-interest prima donnas, each of whom wanted sole possession of the High Commissioner's heart and mind.

In short, just another bloody Monday in late January, the hottest time in the Nairobi year, a time of dust and water shortages and brown grass and sore eyes and heat ripping off the city pavements; and the jacarandas, like everybody else, waiting for the long rains.

Exactly why he was standing was a question he never resolved. By rights he should have been crouched behind his desk, fingering his keyboard, anxiously reviewing guidance material from London and incomings from neighboring African missions. Instead of which he was standing in front of his desk and performing some unidentified vital act — such as straightening the photograph of his wife Gloria and two small sons, perhaps, taken last summer while the family was on home leave. The High Commission stood on a slope, and its continuing subsidence was enough to tilt pictures out of true after a weekend on their own.

Or perhaps he had been squirting mosquito spray at some Kenyan insect from which even diplomats are not immune. There had been a plague of "Nairobi eye" a few months back, flies that when squidged and rubbed accidentally on the skin could give you boils and blisters, and even send you blind. He had been spraying, he heard his phone ring, he put the can down on his desk and grabbed the receiver: also possible, because somewhere in his later memory there was a color-slide of a red tin of insecticide sitting in the out tray on his desk. So, "Woodrow here," and the telephone jammed to his ear.

"Oh, Sandy, it's Mike Mildren. Good morning. You alone by any chance?"

Shiny, overweight, twenty-four-year-old Mildren, High Commissioner's private secretary, Essex accent, fresh out from England on his first overseas posting — and known to the junior staff, predictably, as Mildred.

Yes, Woodrow conceded, he was alone. Why?

"Something's come up, I'm afraid, Sandy. I wondered if I might pop down a moment actually."

"Can't it wait till after the meeting?"

"Well, I don't think it can really — no, it can't," Mildren replied, gathering conviction as he spoke. "It's Tessa Quayle, Sandy."

A different Woodrow now, hackles up, nerves extended. Tessa. "What about her?" he said. His tone deliberately incurious, his mind racing in all directions. Oh Tessa. Oh Christ. What have you done now?

"The Nairobi police say she's been killed," Mildren said, as if he said it every day.

"Utter nonsense," Woodrow snapped back before he had given himself time to think. "Don't be ridiculous. Where? When?"

"At Lake Turkana. The eastern shore. This weekend. They're being diplomatic about the details. In her car. An unfortunate accident, according to them," he added apologetically. "I had a sense that they were trying to spare our feelings."

"*Whose* car?" Woodrow demanded wildly — fighting now, rejecting the whole mad concept — who, how, where and his other thoughts and senses forced down, down, down, and all his secret memories of her furiously edited out, to be replaced by the baked moonscape of Turkana as he recalled it from a field trip six months ago in the unimpeachable company of the military attaché. "Stay where you are, I'm coming up. And don't talk to anyone else, d'you hear?"

Moving by numbers now, Woodrow replaced the receiver, walked round his desk, picked up his jacket from the back of his chair and pulled it on, sleeve by sleeve. He would not customarily have put on a jacket to go upstairs. Jackets were not mandatory for Monday meetings, let alone for going to the private office for a chat with chubby Mildren. But the professional in Woodrow was telling him he was facing a long journey.

***From ‘Bleak House’***

***Charles Dickens***

London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln’s Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another’s umbrellas in a general infection of ill temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little ‘prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation, Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln’s Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds this day in the sight of heaven and earth.

On such an afternoon, if ever, the Lord High Chancellor ought to be sitting here—as here he is—with a foggy glory round his head, softly fenced in with crimson cloth and curtains, addressed by a large advocate with great whiskers, a little voice, and an interminable brief, and outwardly directing his contemplation to the lantern in the roof, where he can see nothing but fog.

