

A Level English Literature At Barking Abbey School

Get ready for Literature...



ENGLISH LITERATURE – Edexcel

Prerequisites :	GCSE 6 and above English and English Literature.
Good Subject Combinations:	Goes well with all subjects
Possible Career Pathways:	Journalism, Teaching, Public Relation, Advisory Work, Law, Researcher, Media, Advertising, Publishing, Librarian, Education consultant.

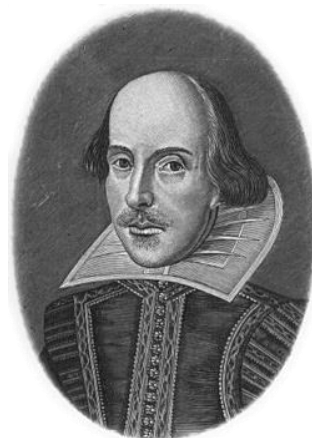
To study A level English Literature, students must have proven ability to respond to Literature texts in a perceptive and critical way. The course will require students to read widely for background information as well as to closely study a variety of set texts. The advanced course is much more academic and rigorous than GCSE with extra assessment objectives and 3 intensive exams to sit in the end of the course.

The A Level course is divided in to 4 papers, one which consists of a 2,500 – 3,000 word essay. Students will study a range of novels, poetry and drama. Wider reading is crucial as both unseen prose and unseen poetry is tested across the two papers.

A Level Literature <i>80% Exam, 20% coursework</i>	
Component 1: Drama	2hr 15min
Section A- Shakespeare	
Section B – Other Drama	
Component 2 One comparative essay	1hr 15min
Component 3: Poetry	2hr 15min
Section A: Post-2000 Poetry	
Section B: Specified Poetry Pre- or Post-1900	
Coursework: One extended comparative essay referring to two texts	

SHAKESPEARE

In September you will be studying a Shakespeare play ready for your A level examinations. Shakespeare is an important element of our cultural and literary heritage so it is really important that you familiarise yourself with the great Bard and his writing.



Why do we still study Shakespeare today?

People still talk about Shakespeare and study his plays because:

- He wrote plays that are enormously rewarding to act and direct
- His characters are endlessly interesting and impossible to reduce to a simple formula
- His language, though now difficult, is subtle, richly varied, and eloquent (this includes the Sonnets, of course)
- The plots of his plays still speak to the experiences of a modern world (think of the recent teen movies *Ten Things I Hate About You* from *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Get Over It* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)
- His plays survive translation, and are performed around the world
- He's just an amazingly good writer!

Which Shakespearean text will I be studying?

Othello: the tragedy of marriage. Othello and Desdemona have a passionate love, which could be seen as a threat to the rules established by patriarchal order: their intense, emotionally charged and equal marriage challenges ideas about class, race and the conformity of women. The play suggests that ultimately, if the social order is to continue, this marriage and what it represents must be destroyed.

How will I be assessed?

Similar to the Literature GCSE Paper 1, you will be given an extract to focus on. You then need to show similar skills, knowledge and understanding of the text, key characters and themes. Ability to analyse the text looking at form, structure and language and finally showing contextual knowledge around the play.

Paper 2 Prose: Science and Society

Compare Texts Pre-1900: Frankenstein, Mary Shelley with Post-1900; The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood.

The extract is taken from Frankenstein (1818). The creature is spending the winter alone and observing a small family. He wishes to communicate with them as he is impressed by their gentleness and simplicity.

Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts create a sense of loneliness. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors. (40 marks)

"I lay on my straw, but I could not sleep. I thought of the occurrences of the day. What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people, and I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions.

"The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman arranged the cottage and prepared the food, and the youth departed after the first meal.

"This day was passed in the same routine as that which preceded it. The young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within. The old man, whom I soon perceived to be blind, employed his leisure hours on his instrument or in contemplation. Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him every little office of affection and duty with gentleness, and he rewarded them by his benevolent smiles.

"They were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often went apart and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness, but I was deeply affected by it. If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill and delicious viands when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed one another's company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain? I was at first unable to solve these questions, but perpetual attention and time explained to me many appearances which were at first enigmatic.

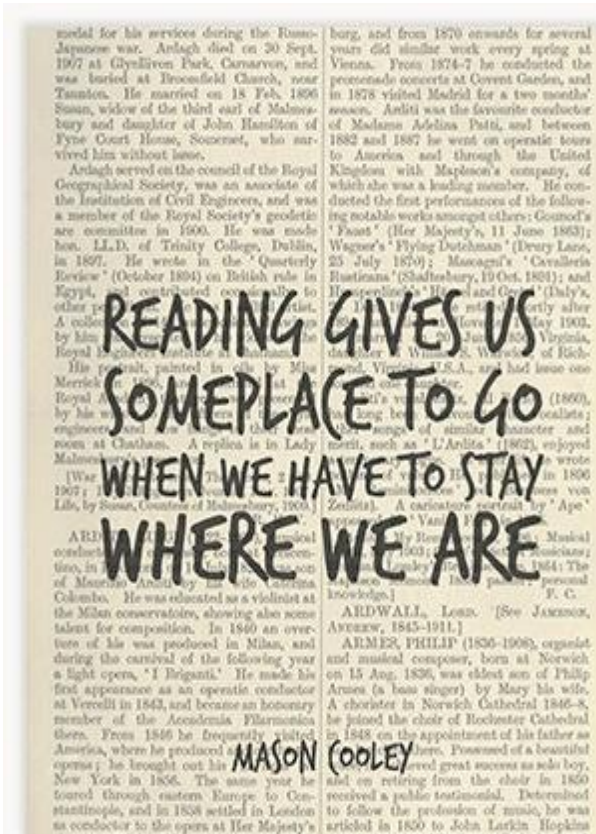
"A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty, and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden and the milk of one cow, which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers, for several times they placed food before the old man when they reserved none for themselves.

"This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption, but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots which I gathered from a neighbouring wood.

How to prepare for A Level English Literature

- Twitter - follow writers and academics who blog about literature
- Keep a blog on your reading and what you have found – far easier than carrying around a big file
- Read a couple of the set texts over the summer – remember to be successful you will need to read a few times before the exams in order to have a really good understanding – If you have not been given this information ask someone in your English department.
- Download electronic copies of your set texts on your device and make notes on it which you can then print
- Download the audio book of the text – Listen and read at the same time
- Get an understanding of what Marxism, feminism etc. are and how they help our understanding of literature
- Historical reading of specific periods in history – Victorian period, Renaissance, Romantic period etc.
- Create a profile of an author you will be studying
- Challenge the teacher with something that you have read
- Library – Google books, school library, university libraries, local libraries
- Download an app called Pocket (available on Android and Apple devices) – keeps all your reading saved in one place
- Write a weekly reflection of what you have learnt each week – These notes can build up to some great revision notes.
- Listen to TED talks on literature and grammar to widen your understand of the subject. This enables you to see what other people’s perspectives are. You can listen to them online or download the app. Follow these links to get you started:
 - <https://www.ted.com/topics/literature>
 - <http://blog.ed.ted.com/2014/05/29/be-a-better-writer-in-15-minutes-4-ted-ed-lessons-on-grammar-and-word-choice/>

“There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.” - *Ray Bradbury*



The Poetry Café

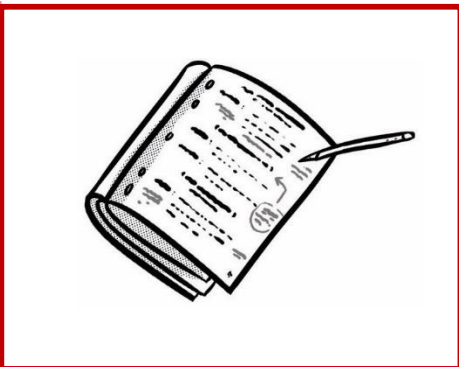
22 Betterton Street
London WC2H 9BX

Email: poetrycafe@poetrysociety.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7420 9888

In the evening the atmosphere is busy and vibrant with poetry readings, slams, music, or book launches happening nearly every night.

For newcomers, or those wishing to read, Poetry Unplugged is London's premier open mic session where people who have never read a poem in public can do so for the first time, or experienced poets can try out something new.

BRITISH LIBRARY



A visit to the British Library is a great experience – you can tour the beautiful grounds and architecture or explore the extensive range of resources. It is the second largest library in the world. The British Library home to the Sir John Ritblat Gallery: Treasures of the British Library, where some of the most significant world treasures can be seen for free, including: Magna Carta, Shakespeare's First Folio, Lewis Carroll's manuscripts of Alice's Adventures Under Ground, Beatles lyrics handwritten by John Lennon, and drawings on pages from Leonardo's Da Vinci's Notebook. The best part is that is free!

<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/quickinfo/facts/>

<http://www.bl.uk/whats-on>

The Globe Theatre – London

This replica of the Shakespeare's 16th century theatre, reconstructed just 200 yards from its original site, is the brainchild of American actor and director Sam Wanamaker. Built in wood and thatch, using techniques from 400 years ago, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre opened in 1996. Although it is not an exact replica, it is close, and plays are performed in the open-air, rain or shine. The thrust stage, and the fact that cheap standing tickets are available for every performance, create a raucous relationship between actor and audience that makes it unlike any other London Theatre. Visitors can also tour the theatre and spend time at the adjacent Shakespeare's Globe Exhibition and in January 2013 the Globe expanded to include an indoor candlelit Jacobean theatre, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, next door.

<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/theatre/whats-on>

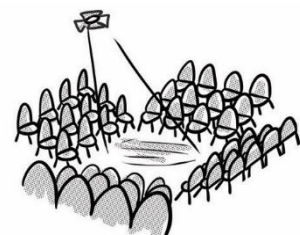
Royal Shakespeare Company

Stratford-upon-Avon is a beautiful town and is full of a rich history and is the 16th century birthplace of Shakespeare. You can explore the history behind Shakespeare's writing then go and watch a performance of one of his plays.

Definitely worth a visit and would really enhance your study and appreciation of the Great Bard!

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/home.html> <https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/?from=mdd>

Watching your favourite texts come alive in front of your eyes beats no other experience. The characters, the interpretations...



Useful Websites

www.universalteacher.org.uk

This website contains comprehensive and interesting guidance about how best to read and discuss a wide range of texts, both individual and paired. A brief but helpful history of English literature, from Middle English to the late 20th Century, is also included.

www.sparknotes.com

This site has basic, but very useful notes on a huge range of commonly studied texts, with chapter synopses, character analyses, themes and motifs, essay ideas, and suggestions for further reading. It is a very useful site indeed.

www.bibliomania.com

Study notes on a very wide range of texts, with notes, suggested essay titles, and guidance on further reading (you need to register to access the material, but at the time of access there appeared to be no charge).

www.novelguide.com

The site contains detailed discussion of a wide range of novels old and new, with relevant background material.

www.s-cool.co.uk/topic_index.asp?subject_id=4&d=0

Some quite basic, but very helpful and reassuring advice on how best to approach the study of literature, notes on how to study poetry, and on a few individual texts.

www.shakespearehelp.com

A very detailed listing of resource material on Shakespeare, his life, times and plays, particularly useful for advanced learners.

www.englishbiz.co.uk

A site geared towards pre-A-Level learners, but it does contain good and practical advice on planning, organising and writing critical and other sorts of essays.

<http://www.litcharts.com/>

Comprehensive guide on lots of texts with detailed study notes.

www.palgrave.com/skills4study/html/index.asp

This site is designed for university learners, but also helpful at A Level. Discusses a range of study skills, including how to structure and write good literature essays.

www.literaryhistory.com

The material here is advanced, but useful and thought-provoking. A wealth of resource material is offered on a huge range of writers, old and modern.

www.victorianweb.org

This site contains very detailed and advanced material – mostly resource-based – on writers from the 19th and very early 20th centuries. Well worth a visit if you are studying a text from this period.

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/>

They publish a great magazine called e-magazine – Ask your teacher if your school has a subscription.