

HELSEBY

Sixth Form



Year 11 Sixth Form Transition Material

Subject

English Literature

Congratulations on choosing to study English Literature at A Level

The information and tasks contained in this booklet will help you to research and prepare for your course when you start at Sixth Form Helsby in September. They will provide you with an overview of what to expect from your A Level studies and help you to develop a greater understanding of the subject.

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it will help you to start thinking about the subject and extra-curricular study and research.

Audio/visual:

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>

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.

Reading

It's not necessary to read the set texts as there is plenty of time during the course to do that, having said that you could try to read them in advance and/or undertake research into the texts themselves and the authors. Reading around the subject would be really helpful.

- 'Othello'. William Shakespeare
- The poetry of Keats
- 'Death of a Salesman'. Arthur Miller
- 'Oliver Twist'. Charles Dickens

Aspects of tragedy

- It might be useful to do a little background reading on the history of tragedy.
- There is a film version of Death of a Salesman on Youtube (1985)
- <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/> There are versions of Othello on the National Theatre archive. Login details: Username:9Vw(5Kg£ Password: 8Vg-5Pg%

Aspects of Crime

As there is an unseen extract on this paper any wider preparation and reading around will be invaluable.

There are lots of fabulous classic crime texts you could read:

- The Big Sleep – Raymond Chandler
- Brighton Rock – Graham Greene
- Agatha Christie – Murder on the Orient Express (Also a film), The ABC Murders (BBC series)
- Truman Capote – In Cold Blood (An amazing book – technically non-fiction)
- John le Carre – The Night Manager (also a BBC series)
- The Moonstone – Wilkie Collins
- The Hound of the Baskervilles – Arthur Conan Doyle
- Rebecca – Daphne du Maurier
- The Woman in White – Wilkie Collins
- Killing Floor – Lee Child
- Robert Galbraith – JK Rowling's crime penname (The Cuckoo's calling is the first one) These books have also been turned into a very good BBC drama which has run for 2 series – worth watching.

Films/Documentaries/TV

Classic Crime Films

A Touch of Evil
The Big Sleep
The Maltese Falcon
Vertigo
Double Indemnity
Rear Window
Goodfellas
Chinatown

More modern classics

The Godfather
Heat
 Fargo
Zodiac
The Usual Suspects
No Country for Old Me (contains violence)

Crime series - Available on BBC Iplayer

Sherlock
Death in Paradise
Line of Duty
Killing Eve

Others:

The Night Manager - John le Carre
The Bridge
Death on the Nile
Murder on the Orient Express
And then there were none

Specification (exam):

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-b-7716-7717/specification-at-a-glance>

UCAS

<https://www.ucas.com/explore/subjects/english-literature-and-creative-writing>

<https://digital.ucas.com/coursedisplay/results/courses?searchTerm=Literature&studyYear=2024&destination=Undergraduate&postcodeDistanceSystem=imperial&pageNumber=1&sort=MostRelevant&learningPreference=None>

Other Resources/ideas and 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-margaretatwood>
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) on the text which covers the basic ideas of the text but also considers it critically.