

A Level Literature Induction



English Literature is a popular and thriving subject at A Level. We offer AQA's A specification. Our syllabus gives students the opportunity to study a wide range of texts: drama, poetry and prose.

Many students choose to study English and related subjects (such as Law and Journalism) at university. Our results are consistently outstanding. Last year, 58% of students obtained grades A*-A, 84% secured grades A*-B and 100% were awarded A*-C. Former students have successfully secured places to read English and related subjects at Oxbridge and at Russell Group universities.

Reading a wide range of texts will help you to prepare for this course. We recommend that you read at least three books over the summer.



1. All groups study Margaret Atwood's popular and influential novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. We recommend ordering the Vintage edition because you will be given a clean copy of this version of the text in the examination. The ISBN number is: 978-1-78487-318-9.

- **Please read *The Handmaid's Tale* over the summer.**

You could consider reading some dystopian fiction to give you a better grasp of this genre. *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury falls into this category. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* influenced Atwood's novel, but be warned - this one contains a very bleak view of a possible future, prompting us to act in the present.

2. You will be introduced to a wide range of novels and short stories from 1945 to the present day. This is part of the unseen prose unit. **Read at least one modern novel from** the lists suggested in the accompanying pack entitled *Making the Leap: Moving from GCSE to A Level Literature study*. There are some prize winning novels suggested on page 17 of this pack. Additional book recommendations can be found on page 12. You could consider reading some short stories too: see page 22. You should find plenty of books to explore and enjoy here!
3. **You should also aim read at least one nineteenth century text.** Here are some suggested books from this category:

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/16.Best_Books_of_the_19th_Century

Audiobooks

See page 28 of the pack for information about free audiobooks. You could listen to some books too.

What else could I do to prepare for this course?

Below are some optional, suggested activities that would help you to prepare for September. The page references refer to the *Making the Leap* resource pack, which is a separate, pdf document.



1. Lockdown has provided us with lots of opportunities to watch plays online. Please find below details of our school login details for National Theatre Live!

We would recommend watching *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams. Some (but not all) classes study this text. In Year 13, you will study a Shakespeare play. The text that you will cover will depend on the group that you are in. Classes usually study either *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, or *A Winter's Tale*. You could watch one of the theatre productions of *Othello* on National Theatre Live.

Please note that the login details below will only give you access to the National Theatre collection of plays on this website. In addition, it will only work on site once schools fully re-open. However, you should be able to use it remotely at the moment.

Take the opportunity to explore some of the other plays on here too. There's an excellent production of *Jane Eyre* here and a very memorable production of *Small Island*.

Your access details are: <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com>

Username: 5St/6Mp&

Password: 7Uv%8Ec/

(The Log in button is in the top right-hand corner of the landing page. Please insert your username and password to left-hand option of the login pop-up.)

2. It is also a good idea to familiarise yourself with some of our resources. The department subscribes to eMagazine; this is a magazine written for A Level students. Suggestions on how to approach this are on page 8. Please find our department login details below.

Emagazine login (<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/e-magazine/emag-login/>)

Username: **english@watfordgirls**

Password: **english**

3. The British Library website contains a lot of useful resources. Our syllabus is historicist, so it is important to show an awareness of when texts were written and to consider the significance of this. See page 23 for some suggested activities.
4. It is a good idea to look at the tasks related to poetry, which are suggested on page 7 of the pack. You will compare two unseen poems linked to the theme Love Through the Ages in Paper 1 and there is also a poetry anthology which we cover in Year 13.
5. You might want to listen to some literary podcasts. See page 20 for suggestions.

Please note that we're not expecting you to produce any written work before you start the course. Instead, we'd like you to engage in some relevant, wider reading and to enjoy exploring some of the resources that will help you to succeed.

Which texts am I likely to study?

This will depend on which class you are in. We will be able to give you the full list of texts that you will study in September when class lists have been finalised. All groups study *A Handmaid's Tale* and compare this with *Feminine Gospels*, a collection of poetry by *Carol Ann Duffy*. You will also study a modern Drama text in Year 12. This will be either *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill, or *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams. In addition, you will be asked to respond to an unseen prose extract (from 1945 to the present day) and we will begin to immerse ourselves in the Love Through the Ages topic by beginning with poetry.

In the summer term of Year 12, we will begin work on your coursework. You will be taught one text and will have the opportunity to select a linked text of your choice to compare with this. Students value the opportunity this provides to pursue their own interests and to write a question with support from teachers.

Please find some student perspectives on the course below:

- 'One of the reasons I enjoy English so much is due to the amount of discussion and conversations that we have when analysing texts. It's so interesting to hear

the various interpretations of what we're studying and to learn how different our opinions and thought processes are. Another aspect I find interesting is the strong links we find between the present and the past.'

- 'Studying English Literature at A Level is a massive contrast to my two other A Levels: Maths and Physics, making it enjoyable to be able to think in a more creative way.'
- 'Studying English Literature has developed my ability to analyse texts in greater depth. Especially at A Level, I have found that the context and overall themes of our studied texts link well to my passion for History, hence the two subjects strongly support each other and my strengths.'

We look forward to welcoming you to the English department in September. Have a great summer!

