

SOUTHFIELDS ACADEMY
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH LITERATURE A-LEVEL



Southfields
Academy

Year 12 Launchpad: independent
study booklet

Introduction to English

Studying English Literature at Southfields Academy requires extensive independent reading. This booklet will give you advice on the texts you need to read in order to pass the course—and the additional reading that is essential if you are to excel in English.

Reading is a habit

Reading is a habit. It is as simple as that. Set aside time every day to read. That may be thirty minutes or an hour before bedtime, on the bus home, in a study room, a café or in the park, but you must foster a reading habit. It is best if you set aside the same time every day, and ideal if you truly enjoy the books you're reading: but you have to read every day. Set yourself a goal: I want to read twenty novels this year, or perhaps ten plays. Create a reading log, or just make a tally on a piece of A4 up in your room. You'll be pleased and encouraged when you achieve your goal.

Wider reading is essential

At A-level you cannot be spoon-fed reading and ideas like at GCSE. Your own wider reading will define your success in the course.

You've just been spewed out of the great GCSE grade-making machine, where your own capacity for individual exploration of the subject has been trammelled (or 'focused') along the lines of the curriculum. Your course was defined for you. Your ability to master particular types of examiners' questions was a large part of your success or failure. Reading and regurgitating study books, notes and quotes could be enough to succeed.

Now, you have the opportunity to form your own understanding of the texts that you read, allowing you to develop into an independent and critical thinker. You are expected to read widely and enquire into all aspects of texts. You must explore the situation of novels, poets and plays in wider history, their place in the history of literature, and the thoughts of others on the texts that you are encountering for the first time. You are expected to read these texts as an enquiring, curious adult. It is essential to explore the complexities in the content and meaning of the texts that you read, as doing so will allow you to excel in this subject.

Course Overview

The course is divided into 3 sections: Drama, Prose and Poetry. Throughout the duration of the course you will be exploring themes and ideas within these forms of literature, making comparisons between texts across different time periods when necessary. As stated below, in your first year you will be studying 4 texts. Your second year will have you develop your knowledge of these texts, as well as studying Othello and John Donne poetry. You will finally sit 3 papers in your final year, completing the A level course.

For more information, here is the specification for our course:

A Level Literature-

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/English%20Literature/2015/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/gce2015-a-level-eng-lit-spec.pdf>

Set texts:

Year 1	Year 2
A Streetcar Named Desire- Tennessee Williams Poems of the Decade (2001-2010) Beloved- Toni Morrison The Picture of Dorian Gray- Oscar Wilde	Othello- William Shakespeare John Donne Poetry

Independent Critical Study (Non-Exam Assessment: 20%)

The coursework component of your A Level qualification is a chance to pursue a piece of independent research and investigation into a specific area of literature. The essay is a comparison of two texts that you have read, linked by theme or idea. This forms 20% of your final A Level grade and is worth a total of 60 marks. This is the product of two years of intensive study of English Literature and should represent the absolute best of your work. You should consider this when reading, note-taking, planning, and writing your work; a long piece of writing feels daunting at first, and will take many hours of planning and drafting before you approach a finished state.

In class, we will be exploring the American dream and guiding you to complete your coursework on two of the selected texts below.

The Great Gatsby- F Scott Fitzgerald Death of a Salesman- Arthur Miller Fight Club- Chuck Palahniuk American Psycho- Brett Easton Ellis Revolutionary Road- Richard Yates Catcher in the Rye- J.D Salinger

Task 1: Literary Techniques

Complete the table, finding the definitions and providing an example for the following terms:

Word	Definition	Example
Alliteration		Little liar
Ambiguity	Something with more than one meaning	
Atmosphere		
Blank Verse		
Caesura		
Couplet		
Dialect		
Dramatic Monologue		
Elision	The omission of a sound or syllable.	'Whiles crooning o'er an auld Scots sonnet'
Enjambment		
Farce		
Free Verse		
Genre		Tragedy, Comedy (Poetry, Prose, Drama)
Hyperbole		
Iambic Pentameter		
Imagery		

Idiom		
Intertextuality		
Irony		
Lyric		
Metaphor	An expression that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristic	
Metre		
Monologue		
Narrative		
Onomatopoeia		
Parody		
Persona		
Personification		
Rhetoric		
Rhyme		
Rhythm		
Satire		
Simile		
Syntax		
Tone		

Death of a Naturalist by Seamus Heaney

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jam-potfuls of the jellied
Specks to range on window sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until
The fattening dots burst, into nimble
Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

Task 2: Read and annotate Heaney's 'The Death of a Naturalist'.

Task 3: Using your annotations and independent research of the unseen poem, complete the poetry knowledge organiser on the next page.

Name of Poem (+ author's name): _____

WHAT: Summary of the poem. What is the "story" of the poem?

WHO are the main characters of the poem? Whose perspective is the poem told from? What is the significance of this?

HOW? What are the four key quotes/images from the poem. Zoom in on symbols or techniques. Explain their significance. At least one of your comments should be about form/structure.

WHEN was the poem written? How does this influence its ideas? How long a period of time does the poem take place over?

WHERE is the poem set? What atmosphere is created by the setting? How do the characters interact with the setting?

WHY do you think the poet wrote the poem? What are the key themes/messages?