

Prospective Year 12 Preparatory work

There are two pieces of preparatory work that you are expected to complete:

1) Writing

500-word essay to be brought to your first English lesson:

Explore Ford's presentation of power in his poem 'Guiseppe'.

2) Reading

You should read and analyse the remaining 19 poems in the Poems of the Decade anthology, considering which you think is the most interesting poem. We would encourage you to record your thoughts about this poem – in any form you choose – as this would be an excellent starting point for discussion when this poem is studied.

[Poems of the Decade \(PDF\)](#)

(NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING POEMS ARE NO LONGER ASSESSED: *Inheritance*, *A Leisure Centre is also a Temple of Learning*, *The War Correspondent*, *The Map Woman*, *The Fox in the National Museum of Wales*, *Fantasia on a Theme of James Wright*, *You, Shiva and My Mum*, *Song*)

You may wish to complete the following reading of core our texts:

King Lear (William Shakespeare)

[King Lear \(PDF\)](#)

A Streetcar Named Desire (Tennessee Williams)

[A Streetcar Named Desire \(PDF\)](#)

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (Thomas Hardy)

[Tess of the d'Urbervilles \(PDF\)](#)

Mrs Dalloway (Virginia Woolf)

[Mrs Dalloway \(PDF\)](#)

Optional Further Reading

Below is a recommended reading list to aid with your projects and to enhance your preparation for the A-level course. The list is extensive, so you should read as much as you wish.

It has been divided into general critical reading, critical reading by text and then other works by our studied authors.

As ever with English Literature, the more widely-read you are, the deeper your understanding and analysis will be.

CLOSE READING

[Connell Guide to How to Read a Poem \(Connell Short Guides\) by Malcolm Hebron](#)

This book has one aim: to help you read, understand and appreciate poetry. Malcolm Hebron has spent years studying and teaching poetry. In this friendly, easy-to-read guide, he passes on what he has learnt while helping you read some famous (and not so famous) poems along the way.

[How to Read Literature by Terry Eagleton](#)

How to Read Literature is the book of choice for students new to the study of literature and for all other readers interested in deepening their understanding and enriching their reading experience.

In a series of brilliant analyses, Eagleton shows how to read with due attention to tone, rhythm, texture, syntax, allusion, ambiguity, and other formal aspects of literary works. He also examines broader questions of character, plot, narrative, the creative imagination, the meaning of fictionality, and the tension between what works of literature say and what they show.

[Connell Guide to How to Write an Essay \(Connell Short Guides\) by Jonny Patrick](#)

What's the secret of writing a good essay? How do you plan it? How do you start it? How do you end it? What do examiners really look for? In this invaluable guide, Jonny Patrick tells you, clearly and concisely, how to write the perfect essay.

TRAGEDY (Lear & Streetcar)

[Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction by Adrian Poole](#)

What do we mean by 'tragedy' in present-day usage? When we turn on the news, does a report of the latest atrocity have any connection with the masterpieces of Sophocles, Shakespeare and Racine? What has tragedy been made to mean by dramatists, story-tellers, critics, philosophers, politicians and journalists over the last two and a half millennia? Why do we still read, re-write, and stage these old plays? This book argues for the continuities between 'then' and 'now'. Addressing questions about belief, blame, mourning, revenge, pain, witnessing, timing and ending, Adrian Poole demonstrates the age-old significance of our attempts to make sense of terrible suffering.

[The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy by Jennifer Wallace](#)

Tragedy is the art-form created to confront the most difficult experiences we face: death, loss, injustice, thwarted passion, despair. From ancient Greek theatre up to the most recent plays, playwrights have found, in tragic drama, a means to seek explanation for disaster. But tragedy is also a word we continually encounter in the media, to denote an event which is simply devastating in its emotional power. This introduction explores the relationship between tragic experience and tragic representation. After giving an overview of the tragic theatre canon - including chapters on the Greeks, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov, post-colonial drama, and Beckett - it also looks at the contribution which philosophers have brought to this subject, before ranging across other art-forms and areas of debate. The book is unique in its chronological range, and brings a wide spectrum of examples, from both literature and life, into the discussion of this emotional and frequently controversial subject

KING LEAR

[This Is Shakespeare: How to Read the World's Greatest Playwright by Emma Smith](#)

'The best introduction to the plays I've read, perhaps the best book on Shakespeare, full stop' Alex Preston, Observer

[Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Very Short Introduction by Stanley Wells](#)

In this Very Short Introduction Stanley Wells considers what is meant by the word 'tragedy', and discusses nine of Shakespeare's iconic tragic plays. He explores how the early definitions and theoretical discussions of the concept of tragedy in Shakespeare's time would have influenced these plays, along with the literary influence of Seneca.

[1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare by James Shapiro](#)

How did Shakespeare go from being a talented poet and playwright to become one of the greatest writers who ever lived? In this one exhilarating year we follow what he reads and writes, what he saw and who he worked with as he invests in the new Globe theatre and creates four of his most famous plays - Henry V, Julius Caesar, As You Like It, and, most remarkably, Hamlet. This book brings the news, intrigue and flavour of the times together with wonderful detail about how Shakespeare worked as an actor, businessman and playwright, to create an exceptionally immediate and gripping account of an inspiring moment in history

[1606: Shakespeare and the Year of Lear by James Shapiro](#)

1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear traces Shakespeare's life and times from the autumn of 1605, when he took an old and anonymous Elizabethan play, The Chronicle History of King Leir, and transformed it into his most searing tragedy, King Lear.

1606 proved to be an especially grim year for England, which witnessed the bloody aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, divisions over the Union of England and Scotland, and an outbreak of plague. But it turned out to be an exceptional one for Shakespeare, unrivalled at identifying the fault-lines of his cultural moment, who before the year was out went on to complete two other great Jacobean tragedies that spoke directly to these fraught times: Macbeth and Antony and Cleopatra.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

[Tennessee Williams \(Critical Lives\) by Paul Ibell](#)

In this gripping biography Paul Ibell discusses Williams as a poet as well as a playwright, at the same time revealing the crises of doomed relationships, promiscuous sex, alcohol and prescription drug abuse that gave the writer the raw material for his plays, but which ultimately destroyed him. Ibell champions the playwright's later work, whose regular and, he argues, unjustified maulings by critics drove Williams further into decline. Ibell also emphasizes the importance of Europe in the imagination of a writer who is best known for plays set in the American South.

[Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell](#)

Margaret Mitchell's page-turning, sweeping American epic has been a classic for over eighty years. Beloved and thought by many to be the greatest of the American novels, *Gone with the Wind* is a story of love, hope and loss set against the tense historical background of the American Civil War.

Important for understanding the context to ASND - conjures up how Blanche sees herself at Belle Reve.

POETRY

[How to Read a Poem by Terry Eagleton](#)

Lucid, entertaining and full of insight, *How To Read A Poem* is designed to banish the intimidation that too often attends the subject of poetry, and in doing so to bring it into the personal possession of the students and the general reader.

Text: Romantic Poetry (all available online)

Songs of Innocence: Holy Thursday by William Blake
Songs of Experience: Holy Thursday by William Blake
Songs of Experience: The Sick Rose by William Blake
Songs of Experience: The Tyger by William Blake
Songs of Experience: London by William Blake
Lines Written in Early Spring by William Wordsworth
Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey by William Wordsworth
Ode: Intimations of Immortality by William Wordsworth
Lines Inscribed upon a Cup Formed from a Skull by Lord Byron
So We'll Go no more A Roving by Lord Byron
On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year by Lord Byron
'The cold earth slept below' by Percy Bysshe Shelley
Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples by Percy Bysshe Shelley
Ode to the West Wind by Percy Bysshe Shelley
The Question by Percy Bysshe Shelley
Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats
Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats
Ode on Melancholy by John Keats
Sonnet On the Sea by John Keats

Jacob's Room

Virginia Woolf

Jacob's Room is Virginia Woolf's own modernist manifesto. Ostensibly a study of a young man's life on the eve of the Great War, it is really a bomb thrown into the world of the conventional novel, as she attempts to capture the richness and randomness of life's encounters. Jacob Flanders is a mere point of contact between a crowd of people, appearing and disappearing in a tableau in which all is flux, without certainty and without a controlling viewpoint. But it seems that the author could not maintain this rigorous impersonality, and the radical technique breaks down, so that we finally see Jacob as a person, just as his world is blown apart.

Read online:

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/The-Beautiful-and-Damned-F-Scott-Fitzgerald.html>

Orlando

Virginia Woolf

Orlando, is a playful mock biography of a chameleonic historical figure, immortal and ageless, who changes sex and identity on a whim.

First masculine, then feminine, Orlando begins life as a young sixteenth-century nobleman, then gallops through three centuries to end up as a woman writer in Virginia Woolf's own time. A wry commentary on gender roles and modes of history, Orlando is also, in Woolf's own words, a light-hearted 'writer's holiday' which delights in ambiguity and capriciousness.

Read online:

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200331.txt>

The Mayor of Casterbridge

Thomas Hardy

Michael Henchard, drunk at a country fair, sells his wife and baby daughter for five guineas. The following day, in despair and remorse, he forswears alcohol and sets out to redeem himself. In time, he becomes a respected merchant and eventually the mayor of the town. But Fate is not to be so easily appeased, and Henchard finds his past actions resonate through and destroy his plans for the future.

One of the greatest novels in the English language, The Mayor of Casterbridge sees Thomas Hardy at his best, bringing landscape and richly imagined characters to life, and setting the hope of love against the forces of Providence.

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/The-Mayor-of-Casterbridge-Thomas-Hardy.html>

Far From the Madding Crowd

Thomas Hardy

An immediate success when it was first published in 1874, Thomas Hardy's "pastoral tale" of the wilful and capricious Bathsheba Everdene, her three suitors, the faithful shepherd Gabriel Oak, the lonely widower Farmer Boldwood, and the dashing but faithless Sergeant Troy, and the tragic consequence of her eventual choice remains one of the most enduring and popular English novels.

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/Far-from-the-Madding-Crowd-Thomas-Hardy.html>

Wessex Tales

Thomas Hardy

Wessex Tales, a collection of short stories including "The Three Strangers", "The Withered Arm", and "The Distracted Preacher", deals with a number of timeless themes seen so often in Hardy's work: marriage, class, revenge, and disappointed love. Many of the tales have a supernatural tinge, and all are set around Hardy's much loved homeland.

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/Wessex-Tales-Thomas-Hardy.html>

The Great Gatsby

F Scott Fitzgerald

'There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars'. Everybody who is anybody is seen at the glittering parties held in millionaire Jay Gatsby's mansion in West Egg, east of New York. The riotous throng congregates in his sumptuous garden, coolly debating Gatsby's origins and mysterious past. None of the frivolous socialites understands him and among various rumours is the conviction that 'he killed a man'. A detached onlooker, Gatsby is oblivious to the speculation he creates, but always seems to be watching and waiting, though no one knows what for. As the tragic story unfolds, Gatsby's destructive dreams and passions are revealed, leading to disturbing consequences. A brilliant evocation of 1920s high society, "The Great Gatsby" peels away the layers of this glamorous world to display the coldness and cruelty at its heart. Read online

<http://www.readprint.com/work-679/The-Great-Gatsby-F-Scott-Fitzgerald>

This Side of Paradise

F Scott Fitzgerald

If the Roaring Twenties are remembered as the era of "flaming youth", it was F. Scott Fitzgerald who lit the fire. His semiautobiographical first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, became an instant best seller and established an image of seemingly carefree, party-mad young men and women out to create a new morality for a new, post-war America. It traces the early life of Amory Blaine from the end of prep school through Princeton to the start of an uncertain career in New York City.

Alternately self-confident and self-effacing, torn between ambition and idleness, the self-absorbed, immature Amory yearns to run with Princeton's rich, fast crowd and become one of the "gods" of the campus. Hopelessly romantic, he learns about love and sex from a series of beautiful young "flappers", women who leave him both exhilarated and devastated. Fitzgerald describes it all in intensely lyrical prose that fills the novel with a heartbreaking sense of longing, as Amory comes to understand that the sweet-scented springtime of his life is fragile and fleeting, disappearing into memory even as he reaches for it.

Read online:

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/This-Side-of-Paradise-F-Scott-Fitzgerald.html>

The Beautiful and the Damned

F Scott Fitzgerald

Anthony Patch is the idle heir to a vast fortune. His wife, Gloria, dazzles society with her good looks. Satisfied by privilege and beauty alone, they are beholden only to the "magnificent attitude of not giving a damn." When Anthony's inheritance is withheld, it causes an irreparable rift in their marriage, threatening their fragile paradise. Oblivious to their future, he and Gloria have little left to define themselves but their ever-receding pasts. A bitter critique of the empty pleasures of post-World War I Café Society, *The Beautiful and Damned* endures not only as a cautionary tale but as a social artifact of the decadent Roaring Twenties.

Read online:

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/The-Beautiful-and-Damned-F-Scott-Fitzgerald.html>

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

Quite simply one of the greatest love stories ever told. A poor country squire is trying to find husbands for his five daughters. When one of them, Elizabeth, meets rich Mr. Darcy at a dance, they don't find much in common. But during the next few months, they overcome their differences and fall in love.

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<http://www.bookstacks.org/pdf/austen-jane-pride-prejudice.pdf>

Emma

Jane Austen

One of Jane Austen's most popular novels. The handsome, clever, rich - and flawed - Emma Woodhouse is perfectly content with her life and sees no need for either love or marriage; nothing however delights her more than matchmaking her fellow residents of Highbury. But when she ignores the warnings of her good friend Mr. Knightley and attempts to arrange a suitable match for her protegee Harriet Smith, her carefully laid plans soon unravel and have consequences that she never expected. This lively comedy of manners with its witty and subtle exploration of relationships, it is often seen as Jane Austen's most flawless work

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Sense and Sensibility

Jane Austen

handsome, clever, rich - and flawed, Emma Woodhouse. Emma is perfectly content with her life and sees no need for either love or marriage; nothing however delights her more than matchmaking her fellow residents of Highbury. But when she ignores the warnings of her good friend Mr. Knightley and attempts to arrange a suitable match for her protegee Harriet Smith, her carefully laid plans soon unravel and have consequences that she never expected. This lively comedy of manners with its witty and subtle exploration of relationships, it is often seen as Jane Austen's most flawless work

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Jane Eyre

Charlotte Bronte

Following Jane from her childhood as an orphan through her experience as a governess at Thornfield Hall, Charlotte Brontë's Gothic classic is an exploration of women's independence in the mid-19th century. At Thornfield, Jane meets the complex and mysterious Mr. Rochester, with whom she shares a complicated relationship that ultimately forces her to reconcile the conflicting passions of romantic love and religious piety.

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Wuthering Heights

Emily Bronte

The classic Gothic love story, Wuthering Heights, tells the tale of Heathcliff, a young orphaned gypsy boy, who is brought to the windswept moors of Yorkshire by Mr Earnshaw, the master of Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff's childhood there is riddled with bullying and humiliation, but the master's daughter, the precocious and untameable Cathy, becomes his ally, and a childhood fondness for one another grows to a great passion.

Following a misunderstanding, Heathcliff believes that Cathy has rejected him, and he leaves Wuthering Heights, only to return after three years have passed. When he returns, now mysteriously rich, he learns of Cathy's marriage to another and vows to focus his passionate nature on merciless revenge. Heathcliff's retribution proves so destructive that left in its wake are not only his enemies, but the very object of his obsession and, ultimately, himself.

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Middlemarch

George Eliot

Dorothea Brooke is an ardent idealist who represses her vivacity and intelligence for the cold, theological pedant Casaubon. One man understands her true nature: the artist Will

Ladislaw. But how can love triumph against her sense of duty and Casaubon's mean spirit? Meanwhile, in the little world of Middlemarch, the broader world is mirrored: the world of politics, social change, and reforms, as well as betrayal, greed, blackmail, ambition, and disappointment.

One of the greatest novels in the English language, Middlemarch is filled with characters that are vivid and true, comic and moving.

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<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/Middlemarch-George-Eliot.html>

The Mill on the Floss

George Eliot

The Mill on the Floss is perhaps the most autobiographical of all Eliot's novels.

The relationship between its heroine, Maggie Tulliver, and her brother, Tom, closely resembles that of George Eliot and her own brother, Isaac. The subject of sibling affection was clearly a deeply poignant one for George Eliot - she also wrote a series of beautiful and evocative sonnets entitled 'Brother and Sister'.

Maggie's feelings as she nurses her dying father also echo those described by George Eliot in a letter when she was in the same situation. And there is something in the essential character and personality of Maggie that reminds us of her creator, of what we know of her from the life she led and the decisions she made.

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/The-Mill-on-the-Floss-George-Eliot.html>

Silas Marner

George Eliot

For 15 years the weaver Silas Marner has plied his loom near the village of Raveloe, alone and unjustly in exile, cut off from faith and human love, he cares only for his hoard of golden guineas. But two events occur that will change his life forever; his gold disappears and a golden-haired baby girl appears. But where did she come from and who really stole the gold? This moving tale sees Silas eventually redeemed and restored to life by the unlikely means of his love for the orphan child Eppie.

One of Eliot's most admired and loved works, Silas Marner is a tender and moving tale of betrayal, greed, loss, and redemption, with a finely drawn picture of early 19th-century England before the loss of the simple rural way of life. This moral tale shows the importance of valuing what really matters in life and that the hand we are dealt may ultimately lead to our happiness. Though it is Eliot's shortest book it still retains all the elements which are most recognisable and admirable about her work.

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Frankenstein

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

In trying to create life, the young student Victor Frankenstein unleashes forces beyond his control, setting into motion a long and tragic chain of events that brings Victor to the very brink of madness. How he tries to destroy his creation, as it destroys everything Victor loves, is a powerful story of love, friendship, scientific hubris, and horror. Shelley's timeless gothic novel presents an epic battle between man and monster at its greatest literary pitch.

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The Last Man

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

A story which may resonate more at the moment, The Last Man is Mary Shelley's apocalyptic vision of the end of human civilisation. Set in the late 21st century, the novel unfolds a sombre and pessimistic vision of mankind confronting inevitable destruction.

Read online / download in various formats:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/18247>

Dracula

Bram Stoker

Stoker's classic Gothic horror novel is famous for introducing the character of the vampire Count Dracula. The novel tells the story of Dracula's attempt to move from Transylvania to England so he may find new blood and spread undead curse, and the battle between Dracula and a small group of men and women led by Professor Abraham Van Helsing

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<http://www.readprint.com/work-1390/Dracula-Bram-Stoker/contents>

Great Expectations

Charles Dickens

Often considered Dickens's best-loved work, Great Expectations features some of his most memorable characters. Pip is an orphan, brought up in a village on the Essex marshes by his disagreeable sister and her husband Joe Gargery, the kind-hearted village blacksmith. Life is harsh and Pip has few prospects until he receives from an anonymous benefactor the chance of escaping the forge for a more promising life in London. But his expectations are fraught with difficulties as he is haunted by figures from his past such as the escaped convict Magwitch, the eccentric Miss Havisham, and her proud and beautiful ward, Estella. As he passes from childhood to adulthood he in time discovers his true self.

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A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times'. Set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution, the novel tells the story of a French doctor who is imprisoned for 18 years in the Bastille in Paris. Upon his release, he moves to London with his daughter, Lucie, whom he had never met. She marries but there is conflict between her husband and the people who decades earlier caused her father's imprisonment. Set against the backdrop of the conditions that led up to the French Revolution, it depicts the plight of the French peasantry demoralised by the French aristocracy and the brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries during the Reign of Terror, towards the former aristocrats.

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<https://freekidsbooks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A-Tale-of-Two-Cities.pdf>

Oliver Twist

Charles Dickens

When young orphan, Oliver Twist, is sold into an apprenticeship with an undertaker, he leaves behind years of miserable servitude and mistreatment at an English workhouse. Hoping to move on to better things, he decides to escape his new, equally dreary surroundings and head to London.

It is there that the novel unravels as Oliver meets a host of larger-than-life characters, including The Artful Dodger, a high-ranking member of a juvenile pickpocketing gang, and their elderly leader, Fagin.

Desperate for affection and the sense of belonging that he has never known, Oliver unwittingly throws himself into a life of petty theft, which soon takes a violent turn with the introduction of one of Dickens' most terrifying characters, Bill Sikes.

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Vanity Fair

William Makepeace Thackeray

Vanity Fair follows the lives of two young women from drastically different backgrounds. Becky Sharp is the daughter of a lowly art teacher while Amelia Sedley is the daughter of a wealthy investor. Although the two women are worlds apart in personality and background, Becky and Amelia become friends while in finishing school. When Amelia invites Becky to her family home, events are set in motion that result in both tragedy and fortune.

Vanity Fair takes the reader into a male-dominated society driven by materialism and greed. It is a world where a woman's position is determined by how well she marries. Becky will settle for nothing less than the best, while Amelia is satisfied with the life she has always known. Thackeray is known for his satirical works targeting British society, and Vanity Fair does just that.

Read online:

<http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/Vanity-Fair-William-Makepeace-Thackeray.html>