

## English Literature A-level Transition Work

Dear A-Level Literature student,

Well done on making an excellent choice.

Below is a list of activities for you to choose from and complete this summer. You must complete at least three hours' worth of activities and submit the results to your teacher when you start in September:

The activities will prepare you for the sorts of learning and activity that form the basis of the A-Level qualification.

I hope you enjoy fulfilling these activities and I look forward to seeing you in September.

Warm regards,

Mr A. Schneider

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Activity	Expected completion time
<p><b>Read as much dystopian literature as you can</b></p> <p>One of your units will be centred around dystopian literature. Read as much dystopian fiction as you can.</p> <p><a href="https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/literary/the-best-dystopian-novels-of-all-time">https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/literary/the-best-dystopian-novels-of-all-time</a> <a href="https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-dystopian-fiction-definition-characteristics/">https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-dystopian-fiction-definition-characteristics/</a></p>	
<p><b>Let a poem brew over time</b></p> <p>Choose a poem. <a href="https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/online-poetry/poems">National Poetry Library</a> <a href="https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/online-poetry/poems">https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/online-poetry/poems</a></p> <p>Set a timer for 10 seconds.</p> <p>Do a 'snapshot' look at the poem for 10 seconds – don't try to read it – and jot down anything you notice about it.</p> <p>Do the same again but this time for 30 seconds.</p> <p>Now put the poem to one side.</p> <p>On three different days over the next week or so, spend about 10 minutes reading the poem and writing about it in any way you want. You might write about what you like or what you are puzzled by or you might just ask questions. It's up to you whether you read over what you wrote on the previous occasion – there are advantages to both ways. Over the course of the next few weeks you could try the activity both ways.</p> <p>On the last day, read the poem again, read over all your writing, then make a few notes or record a voice message exploring how your response to the poem changed and developed</p>	1 hour
<p><b>Watch a play</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/schools/secondary-and-fe/on-demand-in-schools">https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/schools/secondary-and-fe/on-demand-in-schools</a></p> <p><a href="#">Digital Theatre</a> also offers a wide range of plays to watch on-demand (including from the Royal Shakespeare Company). Although this is a subscription site, some of their plays are available on their YouTube site. They are also currently</p>	4 hours

<p>offering a 30-day free trial. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/digitaltheatre">https://www.youtube.com/user/digitaltheatre</a>  <a href="https://www.digitaltheatre.com/consumer/productions">https://www.digitaltheatre.com/consumer/productions</a></p> <p><a href="#">Shakespeare's Globe</a> also has a wide range of plays which can be rented or bought at <a href="https://globeplayer.tv/all">https://globeplayer.tv/all</a></p> <p>Watch the play online. (Try to arrange to watch the same play with friends, and have an interval break in the middle, so that you can chat about it.)</p> <p>Write the script for a podcast/online discussion between a critic and the director. (If you having been watching the same play as some of your friends, hold an 'After Show' discussion. One of you could play the director, one a lead actor and one the interviewer/critic.)</p> <p>You can see examples of this sort of discussion on the following websites (all are freely accessible):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">National Theatre YouTube channel</a>  <a href="http://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7citDojiasj-nMABL_DXku">http://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7citDojiasj-nMABL_DXku</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">National Theatre podcasts</a> <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/nt-talks/id486761654?mt=2">https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/nt-talks/id486761654?mt=2</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Young Vic</a>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqth0oZ0oHJJYftVHd2ZHwaKQ_shhRGhf">https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqth0oZ0oHJJYftVHd2ZHwaKQ_shhRGhf</a></li> <li>4. <a href="#">Shakespeare's Globe</a>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g</a></li> <li>5. <a href="#">RSC</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g</a></li> </ol>	
<p><b>Dip a toe into books about books</b></p> <p>As well as critical books about specific writers, there are also a wide range of books available about literature more generally. Some of these are written for people studying literature at university, others are written for a more general audience.</p> <p>The opening pages of all the books listed below are available online via Amazon's 'Look Inside' feature.</p> <p>Read the opening pages of two or three (or more) of these books. Which would you most like to go on to read? Why?</p> <p>Select tiny quotations which interest or please you. Use these to create a poster, an Instagram post, or a Twitter thread.</p> <p>If you can, talk to a classmate about your choice, or share your selected quotations via the platform recommended and validated by your school. If you can't do this, explore your ideas in a written or voice message to yourself.</p> <p><u>On novels:</u></p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/hownovels">John Mullan: <i>How Novels Work</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/hownovels">https://tinyurl.com/hownovels</a>)</p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/lodgefiction">David Lodge: <i>The Art of Fiction</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/lodgefiction">https://tinyurl.com/lodgefiction</a>)</p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/prosereadwrite">Francine Prose: <i>Reading Like a Writer</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/prosereadwrite">https://tinyurl.com/prosereadwrite</a>)</p> <p><u>On poetry</u></p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/fentonpoetry">James Fenton: <i>An Introduction to English Poetry</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/fentonpoetry">https://tinyurl.com/fentonpoetry</a>)</p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/padelpoetry">Ruth Padel: <i>The Poem and the Journey</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/padelpoetry">https://tinyurl.com/padelpoetry</a>)</p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/yackichpoetry">Mark Yakich: <i>Poetry – A Survivor's Guide</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yackichpoetry">https://tinyurl.com/yackichpoetry</a>)</p> <p><u>On Shakespeare</u></p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/brysonshakes">Bill Bryson: <i>Shakespeare – The World as a Stage</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/brysonshakes">https://tinyurl.com/brysonshakes</a>)</p> <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/smithshakes">Emma Smith: <i>This is Shakespeare</i></a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/smithshakes">https://tinyurl.com/smithshakes</a>)</p>	1 hour

<p><u>On Drama</u>  <a href="https://tinyurl.com/playswork">David Edgar: How Plays Work</a> (https://tinyurl.com/playswork)  <a href="https://tinyurl.com/talktheatre">Richard Eyre: Interviews with Theatre People</a> (https://tinyurl.com/talktheatre) <a href="#">Steve Waters: The Secret Life of Plays</a> (https://tinyurl.com/lifeplays)  <u>On English in general</u>  <a href="https://tinyurl.com/doingenglish">Robert Eaglestone: Doing English</a> (https://tinyurl.com/doingenglish)</p>	
<p><b>The world of Literary podcasts</b>  Listen to a literature podcast. Any of the following would be good places to start (try two or three – the styles and approaches are very different).  Share what you listened to with friends. Which podcast would you most recommend and why?  Keep listening to any of the podcasts you enjoyed (or try out some others), follow the ones you like on Instagram or Twitter and let the presenters know what you thought.  Write a one page review of one of them summarising their ideas and your response to those ideas</p> <p><a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/books">The Guardian Books podcast</a> <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/books">https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/books</a>  <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/books-and-authors/id331296649?mt=2">Radio 4 Books and authors</a>  <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/books-and-authors/id331296649?mt=2">https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/books-and-authors/id331296649?mt=2</a></p> <p><a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/not-another-book-podcast/id1370122551?mt=2">Not Another Books podcast</a>  <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/not-another-book-podcast/id1370122551?mt=2">https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/not-another-book-podcast/id1370122551?mt=2</a>  <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-literary-salon/id495583876?mt=2">The Literary Salon</a>  <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-literary-salon/id495583876?mt=2">https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-literary-salon/id495583876?mt=2</a></p> <p><a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/simon-mayos-books-of-the-year/id1402579687?mt=2">Simon Mayo’s Books of the Year</a>  <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/simon-mayos-books-of-the-year/id1402579687?mt=2">https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/simon-mayos-books-of-the-year/id1402579687?mt=2</a></p> <p><a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/anything-but-silent/id1464701909">Anything But Silent</a> (British Library) <a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/anything-but-silent/id1464701909">https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/anything-but-silent/id1464701909</a></p>	1 hour
<p><b>Listen to Literature</b>  <a href="#">The audiobooks listed below are available to listen to online free of charge.</a> They are all ones you might come across in your A Level literature course. Even if you don’t go on to study any of these particular texts, each will contribute to your wider understanding of literature.</p> <p>If you can, arrange with a few other people to try this activity at the same time – that way you can share your choices and your reviews.  Listen to the opening few minutes of each and choose the one that most grabs you.  Make a brief note of what made you want to keep on listening.  Listen to your choice of audio book.  Create a mind map about the book. Focus on the big picture – what the story is, what it is about (underlying themes and ideas), anything that seems particularly interesting about the way it is written.</p> <p><u>The audio books</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <i>Jane Eyre</i></li> <li>o <i>Frankenstein</i></li> <li>o <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> o <i>Brave New World</i> o <i>My Antonia</i></li> <li>o <i>Ethan Frome</i></li> <li>o <i>Picture of Dorian Gray</i> o <i>The Age of Innocence</i> o <i>The Metamorphosis</i></li> <li>o <i>The Age of Innocence</i> o <i>Wuthering Heights</i></li> </ul>	3 hours

o *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories* o *The Jungle*

[https://stories.audible.com/discovery/enterprise-discovery-21122353011?ref=adbl\\_ent\\_anon\\_ds\\_ds\\_dml\\_cntr-4](https://stories.audible.com/discovery/enterprise-discovery-21122353011?ref=adbl_ent_anon_ds_ds_dml_cntr-4)

### Experience a University Lecture

In 2015 Professor Emma Smith from Hertford College, Oxford University, recorded her undergraduate lecture series on Shakespeare plays. These are all available via Apple Podcasts <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/id399194760> and via Oxford University (<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/people/emma-smith>)

This is how she describes the approach she takes in the lectures:

*Each lecture in this series focuses on a single play by Shakespeare, and employs a range of different approaches to try to understand a central critical question about it. Rather than providing overarching readings or interpretations, the series aims to show the variety of different ways we might understand Shakespeare, the kinds of evidence that might be used to strengthen our critical analysis, and, above all, the enjoyable and unavoidable fact that Shakespeare's plays tend to generate our questions rather than answer them.*

Different approaches, a variety of different ways, thinking around a central critical question, enjoyable, more questions than answers – these lectures are the *perfect* way to experience what it means to be a student of literature (as well, of course, as discovering more about some Shakespeare plays).

The lectures were written and delivered for undergraduates at Oxford University, so you should expect to find them a bit of a challenge. But it's the sort of challenge which someone interested in Literature should find very satisfying, even exciting. And Emma Smith explores her ideas with real clarity and delivers the lecture with humour. So give them a go – don't worry about understanding everything, especially the first time you listen. Use the suggestions below to help you.

Choose the play you studied for GCSE. Look at the mini-description of the lecture and make a note of your own ideas and questions about this idea.

o *Macbeth*: This lecture explores ideas of agency – who or what makes happen the things that happen in *Macbeth*?

o *Twelfth Night*: This lecture takes a minor character in *Twelfth Night* - Antonio - and uses his presence to open up questions of sexuality, desire and the nature of romantic comedy.

o *Romeo and Juliet*: This lecture tackles the issue of the spoiler-chorus, in an already-too-familiar play.

o *The Tempest*: This lecture asks if it's useful to think about the character of Prospero as a self-portrait of Shakespeare.

o *The Merchant of Venice*: This lecture discusses the ways the play's personal relationships are shaped by models of financial transaction, using the casket scenes as a central example.

o *Henry V*: This lecture asks whether the presentation of King Henry V in the play is entirely positive

o *Julius Caesar*: This lecture focuses on the scene with Cinna the Poet to discuss structure, tone, and politics.

o *Othello*: This lecture looks at the central question of race and its significance in the play. o *Much Ado About Nothing*: This lecture asks why the characters are so quick to believe

the self-proclaimed villain Don John, thinking about male bonding and the genre of comedy

2 hours

Listen to the lecture in the background, as you are doing something else, just to get used to the approach and style.

- Listen to the lecture without worrying about taking notes. Afterwards see if you can jot down two or three ideas that interested you. Listen again another day and see if you can add to your notes.
- If you can, arrange with a classmate to listen to the same lecture and swap notes.
- Listen to a second lecture on a play you haven't studied but are interested in. If you can, listen to an audio dramatisation of the play or watch the play online (see activity 4) before you listen to the lecture.
- Reflect on what it was like to listen to a lecture – what did you enjoy? What did you find challenging?
- Draft an email to Emma Smith in which you explore your response to one of her ideas.