



## English Literature

### Bridging tasks

The following tasks are designed to enrich your cultural capital and Literature reference points, and can be undertaken with relative ease, despite current restrictions.

### Developing an understanding of literary devices and terminology.

For our studies at A Level, it is essential that we have a repertoire of literary terminology to apply to our analysis and to support our understanding of texts. Use the glossary provided to check your knowledge of key A Level terms and revise their definitions. You will need to be confident with these terms for your first lesson of Literature.

### Glossary

- Allegory – an metaphor that extends across an entire text (prose or verse), often with a moral message.
- Alliteration – repetition of a letter sound at the start of words.
- Allusion – an indirect reference that draws attention to an idea or expectation eg. We all know what happened to their last roommate...
- Alternate rhyme – ABAB. Rhyme between odd lines and even lines.
- Ambiguity – purposeful mystery or room for interpretation created by the writer.
- Anaphora – repetition of a phrase at the beginning of a line (see Blake's 'London' for an example). *The opposite is epistrophe where the repetition falls at the end of the line.*
- Antagonist – the rival to a protagonist's happiness or success.
- Assonance - repetition of a vowel sound at the start of words.
- Blank verse – a regular, often iambic pattern in poetry or verse drama that does not rhyme.
- Catharsis – a moment of emotional release for the audience or reader.
- Climax – the peak moment of tension building.

- Confessional novel – generally considered a post-World War 2 genre, this form of a novel is often (semi-)autobiographical and allows the writer to express internal struggles. More fictionalised examples pre-WW2 may also be considered part of this genre.
- Denouement – the falling or closing action of a tragedy. Tension is released and the plot is concluded.
- Doppelgänger – a ‘copy’ or mimic of a character, often of malevolent or malicious intent.
- Dramatic irony – information known by the audience or reader that is not known by the central character. Often seen in pantomime ‘he’s behind you!’
- Embedded narrative - a story within a story, for example, a recount of a story told through a letter to another character. Often a feature of epistolary novels.
- Enjambment – a line without a natural pause or punctuation (end-stopped) that forces the reader onto the next line. Often increases the pace or creates discomfort.
- Epigraph – an inscription that can provide brief information or make allusions. In the real world we see these on buildings and statues; in literature these are often short quotes, poems or phrases at the beginning of a text (or section) to suggest the tone.
- Epistolary – telling a story (novel) through letter writing. The inclusion of letters which are printed in a story.
- Epithet – an adjective used to describe a quality of character, often strongly negative but can also be positive. A firm connection must be made between the name and adjective so they are treated ‘as one’.
- Exposition – revealing key information to provide context and background that aids the reader/audience’s understanding of plot and character. For example, two characters speaking of an impending marriage that a father disapproves of (in order to explain his anger when entering the stage).
- Extended metaphor – a metaphor that runs throughout a poem or other literary texts. Similar to allegory.
- Fabliau – a tale told in metre (verse poetry) that is often bawdy or gauche in its humour.
- Foil – a character that contrasts another (often the protagonist) in order to exaggerate the presentation of a character or quality.
- Framed narrative – similar to embedded narratives. A framed narrative offers a main setting or character(s) in which multiple additional stories are told. These short stories are often the focal point of the main narrative and are longer than the main narrative (rather than being used as a plot device to move the main narrative forward).
- Free verse – verse without a regular rhyme or rhythm.

- Hamartia – a tragic character’s fatal flaw which inevitably causes their downfall.
- Hyperbole – extreme exaggeration.
- Iambic metre – a line of ten syllables, five feet (natural pairs of syllables), even syllables carry the stress of the phrase.
- Intertextuality – the relationship between texts. For example, a text taking inspiration from another, parodying another text, quoting or referencing another text.
- Machiavellian – inspired by the Italian diplomat. A Machiavellian character is often cunning, ruthless and deceptive for their own self-interest.
- Metaphor – stating or referring to an item in a way that is not true/ using figurative language that shows the similarity between an item and a comparable idea.
- Misogyny – the mistreatment of women under the belief that they are inferior. This includes dislike, contempt or abuse.
- Ode – a poem written in dedication to a person or item, often flattering in tone. Each stanza traditionally has ten lines, regular metre and set rhyme scheme (ABABCDECDE).
- Oedipal complex – the Freudian belief (based on the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*) that a man has the desire to kill his father and sexually lusts for his mother.
- Patriarchy – a male dominated hierarchy in a society.
- Plastic theatre – a theatre method created by Tennessee Williams in which every element of staging has been considered for maximum impact. Staging, props, lighting and music are all used to enhance key ideas. A form of expressionist theatre.
- Prologue – either a character or an opening section of a text that reveals crucial information required to understand the opening of a text. Can be used to show the change between the events unfolding in the introduction and the situation that came before them.
- Prometheus – mythical Greek hero who angered the Gods by stealing fire from them and delivering it to mankind. He was punished by being bound to a rock and having an eagle eat his liver every day.
- Prose – a text written without metric structure. Punctuation is used to shape meaning and control the pace (instead of line length or rhyme).
- Proxemics – the relationship between items on a stage and their impact on the audience. This includes the positioning of props and a character’s movements in the space on stage.
- Quatrain – a stanza made from four lines.
- Refrain – a phrase or line that is repeated across the poem eg. ‘But nothing happens’ in Wilfred Owen’s ‘Exposure’.
- Repetition – a word or phrase that is used multiple times in a text. See also, anaphora.

- Resolution – like denouement, the falling action or ending of a text. The reader or audience expects the plot to have a natural conclusion.
- Rhetoric – speaking or writing effectively, often with the aim of persuading a reader or audience.
- Rhyming couplets – AABBCC. Rhyme between lines that are directly next to each other.
- Satire – the exaggeration (or possible mimicry of) a character to make a point about society. This is often unkind or critical in order to mock a (political) figure or society.
- Sibilance – repetition of ‘s’ sounds in a phrase. Often creates a hissing sound that reminds the reader of a snake or steam. Can occasionally be used to create a soft, whispering tone.
- Simile – comparing two ideas using ‘like’ and ‘as’. Highlights the connection between these ideas.
- Sophism – an argument that may seem correct on the surface due to its central idea or rationale, but in fact is flawed. Used to deceive others and convince them of something untrue.
- Stanza – separation of groups of lines to create structure in a poem.
- Sublime – a Gothic and somewhat Romantic tradition of exploring extremes that show greatness. Often a description of nature to show its power and might over man.
- Tragedy (Aristotle) – a genre of drama in which a hero of noble birth or origin is forced through unpleasant and horrific circumstances because of a flaw in their character. Traditionally ends in the death of the hero and those he loves because of a fatal error made by the hero.
- Tragic hero – a protagonist of noble birth with a fatal flaw (see ‘hamartia’) that causes his own downfall and often the destruction or death of the other characters in the play. In more modern examples, the tragic hero may be of an ordinary background.
- Tragic structure – exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement (most of these terms are defined in this document). Essentially, a tragedy starts with a problem being revealed. This is worsened through the actions of the characters and leads to a climactic moment in which misunderstandings and mistakes are revealed. The tension is then released as the hero realises their mistake(s) and its consequence and the play concludes, often with a clear moral message for the audience.
- Tragic victim – a character whose death or other accident/injury is the result of the tragic hero’s error or flaw.
- Verse – using line structure and rhythm to organise a text.

## Satellite Texts

To develop your wider reading and appreciation of literature, you should be reading a range of texts outside of the set texts studied. Over the summer, read two or more of the following texts:

*Dracula* – Bram Stoker

*Clockwork Orange* – Anthony Burgess

*1984* – George Orwell

*In Cold Blood* – Truman Capote

*We Need to Talk About Kevin* – Lionel Shriver

*Atonement* – Ian McEwan

*Dr Faustus* – Christopher Marlowe

*Home Fire* – Kamila Shamsie

*Oranges are not the Only Fruit* – Jeanette Winterson

*Alias Grace* – Margaret Atwood

*The Scarlet Letter* – Nathaniel Hawthorne

*The Color Purple* – Alice Walker

*Little Women* – Louisa May Alcott

*Atonement* – Ian McEwan

*Girl, Woman, Other* Bernadine Evaristo

*The Power* – Naomi Alderman

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* – Khaled Hosseini

*Call Me By Your Name* – Andre Acimen

*Oranges are not the Only Fruit* – Jeanette Winterson

*Beloved* – Toni Morrison

*Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* – Fannie Flagg

*Purple Hibiscus* – Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche

*Exit West* – Mohsin Hamid

*Home Fire* – Kamila Shamsie

1. Choose your two (or more) texts.
2. Read the text, making notes on the plot, characters, settings, themes, imagery and key ideas of the text.
3. Write a review of each text that you have read. Use the links below to develop an appropriate style.
4. Be prepared to share your reviews (and your opinions on the texts you have read) in your first week of A Level Literature.

*Home Fire*: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/10/home-fire-kamila-shamsie-review>

*Oranges are not the Only Fruit*:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/oct/20/jeanettewinterson>

*Atonement*: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/22/fiction.ianmcewan>