



**ST CHRISTOPHER'S SIXTH FORM
ENGLISH COMBINED
(LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE)
BRIDGING UNIT**

English Combined (Language and Literature)

Introduction

The first year of the course will entail the study of contemporary prose, poetry and drama texts, together with linguistic analysis of non-fiction texts. As well as studying four set texts during the year, you will learn to use specific linguistic terminology when analysing and comparing texts.

We follow the AQA specification and you can explore the specification using this link:

[AQA | English | A-Level | A-level English Language and Literature](#)

The units studied at A-Level are:

- 1. Imagined Worlds** (The Handmaid's Tale)
- 2. Remembered Places** (AQA Paris Anthology)
- 3. Poetic Voices** (Carol Ann Duffy Poetry)
- 4. Writing about Society** (The Great Gatsby)
- 5. Dramatic Encounters** (A Streetcar Named Desire)
- 6. NEA** (Language Investigation)

Methods of language analysis underneath the A-Level language frameworks: Grammar, Lexis, Phonology, Discourse, Semantics, Pragmatics and Graphology underpin each of the above units.

The course is broken down over two years:

Lower Sixth:

- You will study the **Language Frameworks**, which underpin every part of both exams.
- You will study **'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams** as part of the 'Exploring Conflict' part of the Paper 2 exam.
- You will study the **'AQA Paris Anthology'** as part of the 'Remembered Places' part of the Paper 1 exam.
- You will study **'A Handmaid's Tale' by Margaret Atwood** as part of the 'Imagined Worlds' part of the Paper 1 exam.
- You will study **'Mean Time'** poetry by Carol Ann Duffy as part of the 'Poetic Voices' part of the Paper 1 exam.

Upper Sixth

- You will study **'A Great Gatsby' by Scott. F. Fitzgerald** as part of the 'Writing about Society' part of the Paper 2 exam.
- You will complete your **Non-Examination Assessment** which is a Language Investigation and Commentary as part of the 'Making Connections' element of the A-Level.
- You will then revisit previous texts and refine exam technique for the remainder of Year 13.

You will sit mock examinations in December covering Year 12 content, followed by a full set of mock exams in June.

More information can be found using the link to the specification at a glance:

[AQA | English | A-Level | A-level English Language and Literature](#)

You can also search under AQA A-level Language for the specification.

Preparation

A Level English Language and Literature is an ideal course for those who have a passion for reading together with a fascination with language. In order to prepare for the course, you would benefit from spending some time during the summer reading a range of Literature by different authors, from different literary periods. This will help you prepare for the coursework which is worth 20% of your final mark.

You should consider reading some of the following, available on Amazon, or you could search for recommendations in quality book shops:

Prose Fiction

Dystopian novels and works of speculative fiction which explore themes of indoctrination, control and oppression will form the most useful base for your study of Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale.'

- Margaret Atwood – The Handmaid's Tale, The Testaments
- George Orwell – 1984, Animal Farm
- Aldous Huxley – Brave New World

Non-fiction

Non-fiction texts which focus on the city of Paris in France will form the most useful base for your study of the AQA Paris Anthology.

- Bill Bryson – Neither Here nor There: Travels in Europe
- George Orwell – Down and out in Paris and London

Dramatic Encounters

Mid-19th Century American plays will form the most useful base for your study of Tennessee Williams's 'A Streetcar Named Desire.'

- Tennessee Williams – A Streetcar Named Desire, The Glass Menagerie
- Arthur Miller – Death of A Salesman
- Margaret Mitchell – Gone with the Wind

Writing about Society

Mid-19th Century American novels will form the most useful base for your study of Scott F. Fitzgerald's 'A Great Gatsby.'

- Tennessee Williams – A Streetcar Named Desire, The Glass Menagerie
- Arthur Miller – Death of A Salesman
- Margaret Mitchell – Gone with the Wind

Poetry

Poetry which explores similar themes to Carol Ann Duffy's 'Mean Time' collection will be the most useful.

- Carol Ann Duffy – 'Mean Time' poetry
- Seamus Heaney – 'New Selected Poems' 1966-1987 poetry

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It is also important to have some understanding of the social, cultural and historical contexts of the books that you read and study.

Also, remember that language is all around us: think about how it is used in newspapers and magazines, on television, on the radio, and even in everyday conversations.

If you require any further details about the course, these can be found on the examination board's website, which is www.aqa.org.uk. We look forward to seeing you in September.

Preparatory Work: Studying Imagined Worlds

Pre-Reading Exploration: A Streetcar Named Desire

The Handmaid's Tale – Chapter 1

We slept in what had once been the gymnasium. The floor was of varnished wood, with stripes and circles painted on it, for the games that were formerly played there; the hoops for the basketball nets were still in place, though the nets were gone. A balcony ran around the room, for the spectators, and I thought I could smell, faintly like an afterimage, the pungent scent of sweat, shot through with the sweet taint of chewing gum and perfume from the watching girls, felt-skirted as I knew from pictures, later in miniskirts, then pants, then in one earring, spiky green-streaked hair. Dances would have been held there; the music lingered, a palimpsest of unheard sound, style upon style, an undercurrent of drums, a forlorn wail, garlands made of tissue-paper flowers, cardboard devils, a revolving ball of mirrors, powdering the dancers with a snow of light. There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without a shape or name. I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then, in the small of the back, or out back, in the parking lot, or in the television room with the sound turned down and only the pictures flickering over lifting flesh. We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability? It was in the air; and it was still in the air, an after-thought, as we tried to sleep, in the army cots that had been set up in rows, with spaces between so we could not talk. We had flannelette sheets, like children's, and army-issue blankets, old ones that still said U.S. We folded our clothes neatly and laid them on the stools at the ends of the beds. The lights were turned down but not out. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts.

Read the extract carefully.

As you read, annotate anything that seems:

- unusual
- significant
- mysterious
- symbolic

You are not expected to understand everything yet.

Task 1: Exploring a Semantic Field

A semantic field is a group of words connected by a shared idea.

Step 1: Find a semantic field in the extract.

You might choose:

- school and education
- youth and adolescence
- military control
- imprisonment and surveillance
- memory and the past

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Step 2

Create a table:

Word/Phrase	Semantic Field	Effect on the Reader
<i>Gymnasium</i>	<i>School/childhood</i>	<i>Creates a familiar setting</i>

Step 3

Answer:

1. Why does Atwood repeatedly refer to objects from the gym's previous use?

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2. What contrast is created between the gym's past and present?

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3. What does this semantic field suggest about the society in the novel?

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Challenge:

How does the semantic field contribute to a sense of loss or change?

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Task 2: Symbolism and Meaning

Writers often use objects and settings symbolically.

Choose TWO of the following:

Symbol	What might it represent?
The gymnasium	
The missing basketball nets	
The army cots	
The lights turned down but not out	
The electric cattle prods	
The space between the beds	

For each symbol:

1. Explain its literal meaning.
2. Explore its possible symbolic meaning.
3. Consider what it reveals about the people living in this society.

Challenge:

The narrator describes memories as:

“a palimpsest of unheard sound”

Research the term palimpsest and explain why it might be an important metaphor for memory and loss.

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Task 3: First Impressions of Society

At this point, you likely know nothing about the world of the novel except what appears in this extract.

Consider:

1. What freedoms does the narrator appear to have?

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2. What freedoms might they have lost?

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3. Why are they prevented from talking?

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4. What is the significance of authority figures carrying “electric cattle prods”?

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5. What emotions dominate the extract?

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Find Evidence

Select three quotations that suggest:

control:

fear:

nostalgia:.....

Task 4: The Writer's Message

Read these final lines again:

"We yearned for the future."

and

"They had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts."

Questions:

1. Why does Atwood place ideas of hope and control so close together?

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2. What warning might she be giving readers?

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3. What might happen to a society when people lose freedom gradually?

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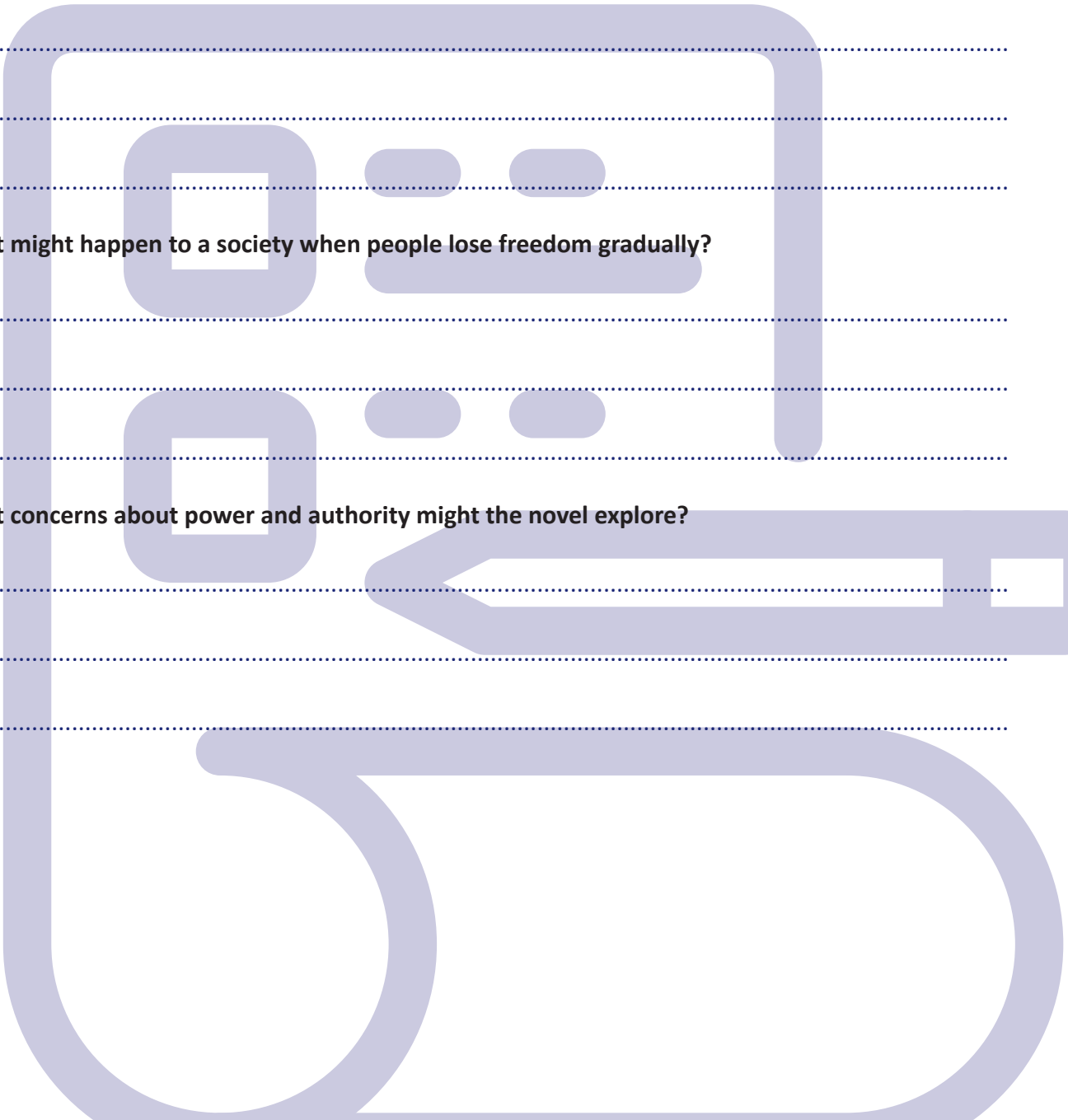
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4. What concerns about power and authority might the novel explore?

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Independent writing Response

Write one paragraph answering:

Based solely on this extract, what message do you think Margaret Atwood may be communicating about freedom and control in society?

Try to:

- analyse language
- explore symbolism
- identify a semantic field
- consider Atwood's possible wider message (ideas about surveillance, loss of freedom, nostalgia, conformity and authoritarian control.)

Preparatory Work: Studying Dramatic Encounters

Pre-Reading Exploration: A Streetcar Named Desire

Before studying Tennessee Williams’ play, complete the following activities to develop your understanding of the world in which the play is set. You are not expected to know anything about the characters or plot yet. Instead, focus on the social, historical and literary ideas that shaped the play.

Task 1: The Old South vs The New World

One of the central tensions in the play is the clash between two different versions of America.

Step 1: Research the following terms:

The Old South

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The American South after the Civil War

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Industrial America

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The American Dream

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Step 2: Create a comparison table:

	The Old South	The New World
Wealth and class		
Family status		
Education		
Gender expectations		
Ideas about success		

Answer:

1. Why might some people struggle to adapt to social change?

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2. Why might old traditions become difficult to maintain in a modern society?

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3. Which values seem more powerful in a rapidly changing world?

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Challenge

How might conflict arise when people hold very different views about status, success and identity?

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Task 2: New Orleans – A City of Change

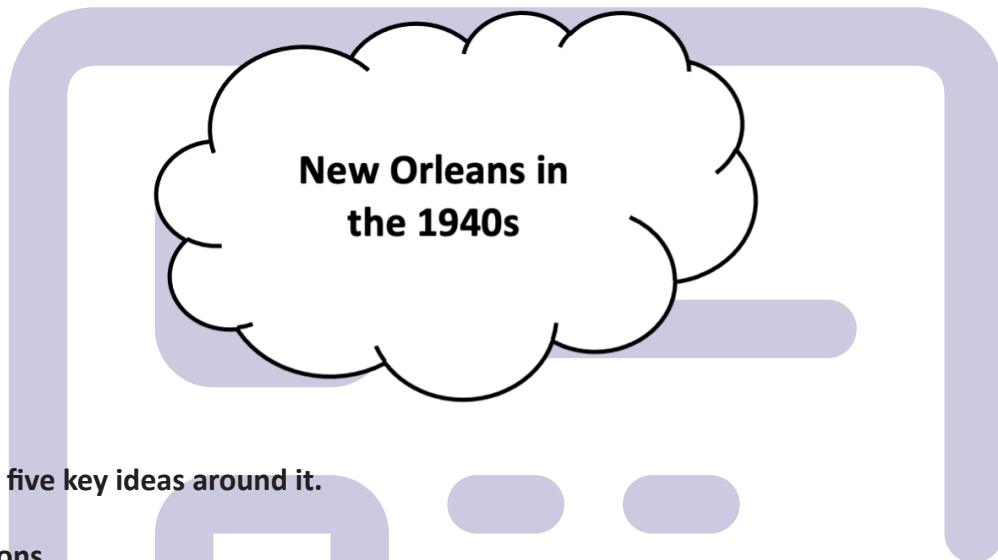
The play is set in New Orleans during the 1940s.

Research: Find out about New Orleans during this period.

You may wish to explore:

- Immigration and cultural diversity
- Music and nightlife
- The influence of jazz
- Working-class communities
- Why the city was often viewed as more liberal than other Southern states

Create a Mind Map



Add at least five key ideas around it.

Questions

1. Why might people be attracted to a city like New Orleans?

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2. How does a culturally diverse city challenge traditional social hierarchies?

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3. Why might some people view such a city as exciting while others view it as threatening?

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Challenge

How could a city symbolise freedom, opportunity and reinvention?

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Task 3: Women and Patriarchal Society

The play was first performed in 1947.

Research

Find out about:

- Women's roles after World War II
- Marriage expectations
- Employment opportunities for women
- The meaning of patriarchy
- Discussion Questions
- What opportunities were available to women in the 1940s?
- What pressures might women have faced?
- How much independence were women expected to have?
- Who held most social, political and economic power?

Find Evidence

Locate three facts about women's lives in the 1940s that differ to modern society.

1.

2.

3.

Challenge

Write a short paragraph explaining:

How might a patriarchal society affect a woman's sense of identity and freedom?

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Task 4: Tragedy and Female Subordination

Many critics describe *A Streetcar Named Desire* as a modern tragedy.

Research

What are the typical conventions of tragedy?

You might investigate:

- The tragic protagonist
- Hamartia (fatal flaw)
- Downfall
- Suffering
- Audience sympathy
- Conflict between the individual and society
- Questions
- Why are audiences often fascinated by tragic stories?
- Why might writers use tragedy to explore social issues?
- What kinds of pressures can society place on individuals?

Female Subordination

Research the term: Female Subordination

Then answer:

1. What does the term mean?

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2. How might social expectations limit women's choices?

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3. Why might women be judged differently from men?

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Challenge: Complete the sentence:

A tragedy involving a female protagonist may reveal that.....

Task 5: The Writer's Message

You now know that the play was written in post-war America and explores a society experiencing rapid change.

Explore:

- What happens when old values collide with new values?
- Why might some people struggle to find their place in a changing society?
- How can power operate within families and relationships?
- Why might social expectations become destructive?

Extended Response

Write one paragraph answering:

Based on your research, what issues do you think Tennessee Williams may be exploring in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

Try to:

- refer to the Old South and the New World
- consider patriarchy and gender expectations
- discuss New Orleans as a setting
- make links to tragedy

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**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.”**

Jeremiah 29:11

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