



# English Literature

## Introduction

English Literature is, essentially, a contemplation of the human condition. Throughout your two years, you will study texts from a variety of time periods and consider questions which are just as relevant today as they were in Shakespeare's time: the struggle between good and evil, the terrifying allure of power and the ability of love to conquer all.

## Course Outline

There are four components to the English Literature A Level, as follows:

- Component 1: Drama (written examination – 2 hours) 30%
- Component 2: Poetry (written examination – 2 hours) 30%
- Component 3: Unseen Texts (written examination – 2 hours) 20%
- Component 4: Non-Exam Assessment (Coursework) 20%

## The course is broken down over 2 years:

### Year 12

- **Poetry**

You will study two collections alongside each other, both from the 20th Century:

- 'The Whitsun Weddings', Philip Larkin
- 'Mean Time', Carol Ann Duffy

- **Drama**

You will study both plays individually, and then consider the comparisons between them

- Doctor Faustus, Christopher Marlowe (16th Century)
- Enron, Lucy Prebble (21st Century)

- **NEA**

The coursework element requires students to study two texts, and prepare a 3000 word essay comparing an element of these two novels. We study:

- The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald (20th Century)
- Atonement, Ian McEwan (21st Century)

The end of year examination will cover Poetry and Drama.

### Year 13

- **NEA**

As you return to the course in September of your second year, you will concentrate initially on the completion of your coursework, choosing a title and drafting your essay with guidance from your teachers. First drafts are due following October half term, with final submissions in November.

- **Poetry**

- Selected Poems, Christina Rossetti (19th Century)

- **Drama**

- Antony & Cleopatra, William Shakespeare (16th Century)

- **Unseen Texts**

There are two elements to this exam, Prose and Poetry. You are given the choice of two prose extracts and two poems, and have to analyse one of each.

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

The detailed specification can be found here:

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/media/gkxh25ep/eduqas-a-level-english-lit-spec-from-2015-e.pdf>

## Recommendations

Your choice to study English Literature at A Level should be inspired by a love and enthusiasm for the subject and we encourage you to read as much and as widely as possible. The best results are achieved by those students who undertake independent enquiry, including reading additional literature, as all components contain marks for understanding the context of a text.

Whilst we do not expect you will read, watch or listen to all of these recommendations, certainly choosing a few to explore during the summer and throughout your two years of study will give you a greater understanding of the course content and allow you to access the highest marks.

There is also a more general reading list, with personal recommendations from the Department, at the end of this unit.

### You may wish to:

#### READ

<b>Birdsong</b>	Sebastian Faulks	Helpful for understanding the context of Atonement
<b>Careless People: Murder, Mayhem and the Invention of The Great Gatsby</b>	Sarah Churchwell	This non-fiction account considers the influences on Fitzgerald at the time of writing The Great Gatsby.
<b>Tender is the Night</b>	F Scott Fitzgerald	Reading some of Fitzgerald's other work will complement your study of The Great Gatsby.
<b>The Go-Between</b>	L.P. Hartley	A 20th Century novel which deals with issues of memory, class and betrayal, similar to Atonement.
<b>The Ode Less Travelled</b>	Stephen Fry	A highly accessible and entertaining introduction into the mechanics and the purposes of poetry.
<b>The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe</b>	Charles Nicoll	A non-fiction account that examines Marlowe's life and death, tracing his political dealings and involvement in court intelligence.
<b>The Smartest Guys in the Room</b>	Bethany McLean & Peter Elkind	A non-fiction account of the Enron scandal by the journalist who first exposed the company's financial irregularities.
<b>The Turn of the Screw</b>	Henry James	This late 19th Century Gothic novella explores themes of perception and guilt, similar to Atonement.
<b>The World's Wife</b>	Carol Ann Duffy	A feminist reimagining of historical and mythical women.

#### WATCH

<b>Cleopatra</b>	Epic Histories	An informal look at the latter half of Cleopatra's life, including her affair with Marc Antony. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4ZEeVOXxog">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4ZEeVOXxog</a>
<b>F Scott Fitzgerald</b>	BBC	A short documentary film about the writer's life. Available on YouTube (BBC Sincerely F Scott Fitzgerald). <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCfUsaX5F10">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCfUsaX5F10</a>
<b>Romeo &amp; Juliet (1996)</b>	William Shakespeare (Dir: Baz Luhrmann)	Explores ideas of tragic love which are central to The Great Gatsby, Atonement and Antony & Cleopatra.
<b>The Hollow Crown</b>	BBC	A series of dramatisations of Shakespeare's plays.

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## LISTEN

Antony and Cleopatra	Shakespeare for All	A deep dive into both the plot of the play, as well as the language and cultural backgrounds.
In Our Time: Christina Rossetti	BBC Sounds	This episode provides some general background and context on the poet. <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b017mvwy">https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b017mvwy</a>
That Shakespeare Life	Cassidy Cash	Podcast which delves into the intricacies of the world Shakespeare lived in, and those he created in his plays. <a href="https://www.cassidycash.com/">https://www.cassidycash.com/</a>
The Play's The Thing	Acast Network	This has episodes dedicated to every Shakespeare play, as well as some dealing with broader aspects of his life and the period. <a href="https://shows.acast.com/the-plays-the-thing/episodes">https://shows.acast.com/the-plays-the-thing/episodes</a>
This Cultural Life: Ian McEwan	BBC Radio 4 (BBC Sounds)	The author discusses formative influences that have shaped his writing. <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001n1h4">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001n1h4</a>

## Preparatory Work: Studying Poetry

Read the following poem by Carol Ann Duffy and answer the questions which follow.

### Havisham (New Collected Poems 1984-2004)

*Beloved sweetheart bastard. Not a day since then  
I haven't wished him dead. Prayed for it  
so hard I've dark green pebbles for eyes,  
ropes on the back of my hands I could strangle with.*

*Spinster. I stink and remember. Whole days  
in bed cawing Nooooo at the wall; the dress  
yellowing, trembling if I open the wardrobe;  
the slewed mirror, full-length, her, myself, who did this*

*to me? Puce curses that are sounds not words.  
Some nights better, the lost body over me,  
my fluent tongue in its mouth in its ear  
then down till I suddenly bite awake. Love's*

*hate behind a white veil; a red balloon bursting  
in my face. Bang. I stabbed at a wedding cake.  
Give me a male corpse for a long slow honeymoon.  
Don't think it's only the heart that b-b-b-breaks.*

1. **Antithetical language** refers to opposing or contrasting words. Find and annotate an example of this in the first line. What does this use of language reveal to us about the speaker's state of mind?

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2. Find and annotate the metaphor on the third line. What is the significance of the colour 'green' here? What are the connotations of 'pebbles'?

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3. This is Medusa, a Gorgon from Greek mythology. The myths tell us that all who looked into her eyes turned to stone. How might the mythical figure of Medusa relate to the metaphor 'I've dark green pebbles for eyes'? What does it suggest to us about the speaker?



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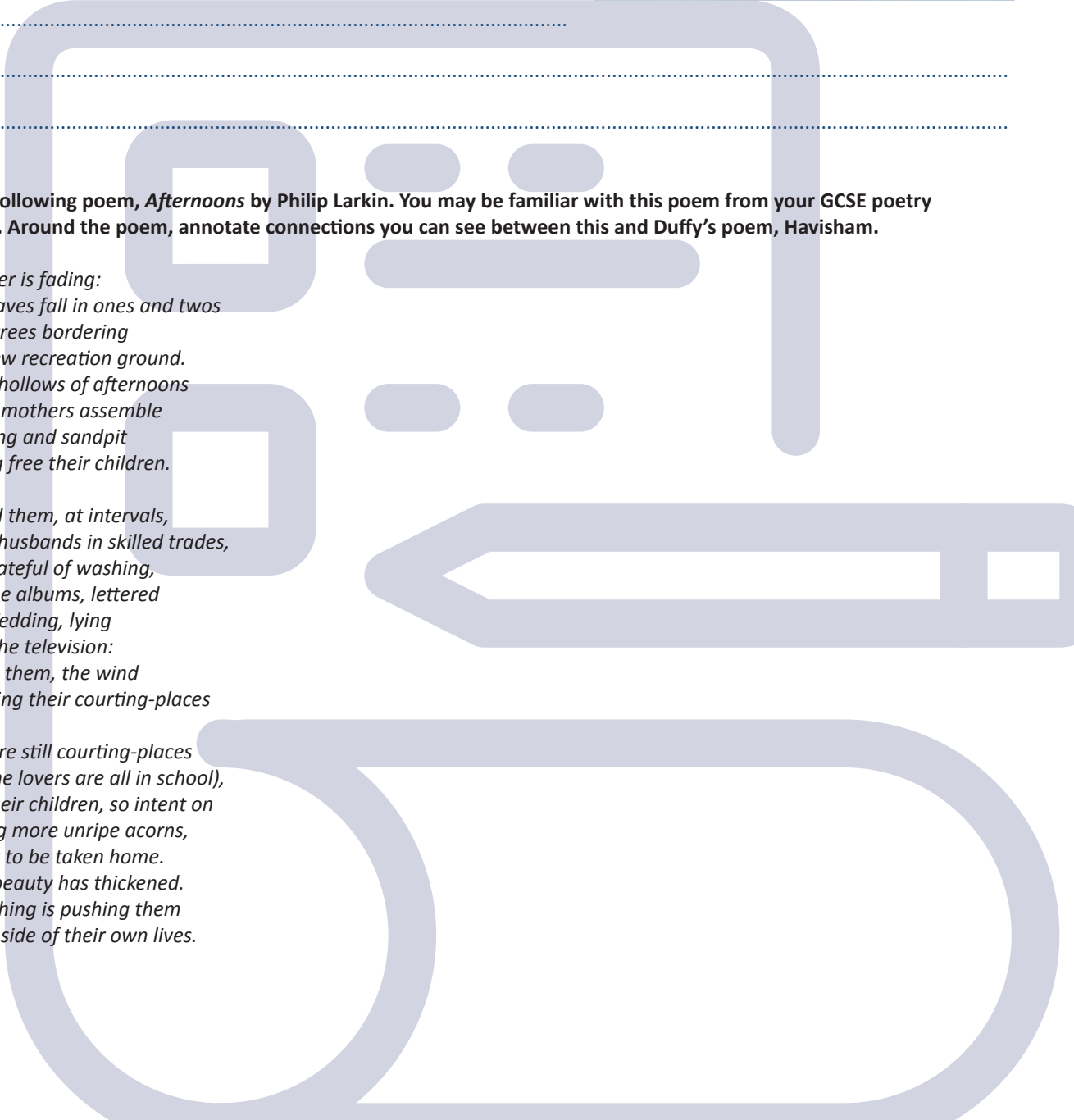
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4. Read the following poem, *Afternoons* by Philip Larkin. You may be familiar with this poem from your GCSE poetry anthology. Around the poem, annotate connections you can see between this and Duffy's poem, *Havisham*.

*Summer is fading:  
The leaves fall in ones and twos  
From trees bordering  
The new recreation ground.  
In the hollows of afternoons  
Young mothers assemble  
At swing and sandpit  
Setting free their children.*

*Behind them, at intervals,  
Stand husbands in skilled trades,  
An estateful of washing,  
And the albums, lettered  
Our Wedding, lying  
Near the television:  
Before them, the wind  
Is ruining their courting-places*

*That are still courting-places  
(But the lovers are all in school),  
And their children, so intent on  
Finding more unripe acorns,  
Expect to be taken home.  
Their beauty has thickened.  
Something is pushing them  
To the side of their own lives.*



5. Write a comparative paragraph comparing the presentation of women in these two poems.

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Preparatory Work: Studying Drama

Although we do not study Shakespeare until Year 13, a thorough understanding of the genre of tragedy is essential. You will likely have studied either Macbeth or Romeo and Juliet for your GCSE. Please read whichever of these plays you did NOT study in Year 10/11 (film versions are also listed in the list of recommendations above). Once you have done this, please complete the tasks below.

Like the Shakespeare plays listed above, Christopher Marlowe’s 16th Century play Doctor Faustus centres around a tragic hero, the **eponymous** (look it up) Doctor Faustus. The generally accepted definition of a tragic hero comes from the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who said “A man doesn’t become a hero until he can see the root of his own downfall.”

Aristotle identified several characteristics a tragic hero should possess. Arguably, the five most important are as follows:

- Hamartia  
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- Peripeteia brought about because of the hero’s error in judgment.  
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- Anagnorisis  
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- Hubris  
.....
- The character’s fate must be greater than deserved.

1. Look up the definitions of the words in **bold** and write the definitions above.

2. Complete the table below, considering to what extent these characters can be considered tragic heroes. For each character trait, include an explanation and, if possible, quotations to support your point. The first ones are done for you as an example.

Character Trait	Romeo	Macbeth
<i>Hamartia</i>	<i>Romeo's hamartia is his reckless and impulsive nature, which leads him to make irrational and rushed decisions, e.g. when he says to Juliet he wishes for 'th' exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine'. This is a fatal flaw or error of judgment as he is being ruled by his emotions, rather than by logic or caution.</i>	<i>Arguably, Macbeth's hamartia is his susceptibility to manipulation by Lady Macbeth (or maybe simply Lady Macbeth herself...). It is Lady Macbeth who coerces Macbeth into the act of murdering King Duncan: 'When you durst do it, then you were a man', 'Yet I do fear thy nature is too full of the milk of human kindness'.</i>
<i>Peripeteia</i>		
<i>Anagnorisis</i>		
<i>Hubris</i>		
<i>Harsh fate</i>		

3. Choose either Macbeth or Romeo and explain to what extent they should be considered a tragic hero. Include the vocabulary from Aristotle's definition, examples from your research, and come to a conclusion.

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## Preparatory Work: Studying Prose

In the Spring Term of Year 12, you will begin reading the coursework novels, *Atonement* and *The Great Gatsby*. In class we will conduct detailed discussions of the themes, context, writers' techniques and literary genres of these texts; this will also prepare you for the Unseen Prose element of Component 3.

In addition, it is important to read as widely and as often as possible to develop the skills required of independent and autonomous readers.

Read the following extract from *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and complete the tasks below.

*The novel was published in 1899 and set contemporaneously, when European colonisation of Africa was at its height. The main story is told from the perspective of London-born Marlow, a sailor who is employed by the Company, a large ivory-trading firm working out of the Congo. He journeys up the Congo River to meet Kurtz, reputed to be a “remarkable man”. Marlow encounters widespread inefficiency and brutality in the Company’s stations. The cruelty of imperial enterprise contrasts with the jungle that surrounds the European settlements, making the settlements appear to be tiny islands amidst a vast darkness.*

When you have read the extract and answered the annotation questions, write a paragraph in response to the following question:

**What are your impressions of the narrator in this passage? Include quotations and subject terminology.**

[illegible]

This is a reference to a 14th Century narrative poem by an Italian philosopher named Dante Alighieri. Write a brief synopsis of the poem here.

Conrad uses *antithetical language* here (look it up). What is the effect of this?

At last I got under the trees. My purpose was to stroll into the shade for a moment; but no sooner within than it seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some **Inferno**. The rapids were near, and an **uninterrupted, uniform, headlong, rushing noise filled the mournful stillness of the grove**, where not a breath stirred, not a leaf moved, with a mysterious sound -- as though the tearing pace of the launched earth had suddenly become audible.

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. **The work was going on. The work!** And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die.

They were dying slowly -- **it was very clear**. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now -- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. **Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest.** These moribund shapes were free as air -- and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of the eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young -- almost a boy -- but you know with them it's hard to tell. I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's ship's biscuits I had in my pocket. The fingers closed slowly on it and held -- there was no other movement and no other glance. He had tied a bit of white **worsted** round his neck -- **Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge -- an ornament -- a charm -- a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it?** It looked startling round his black neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas.

What is the effect of the repetition and short, exclamatory sentence here?

What does the use of hyphens here suggest about the narrator's thoughts and feelings?

The writer has used *asyndetic listing* here (look it up) to describe the miners. What is the effect of this?

Look up this word and write down the definition.

Look up this word and write down the definition.

Analyse the writer's use of questions here. What does this reveal about the narrator's thoughts and feelings?

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In addition, we would like you to keep a reading diary over the summer. This should include at least one of the texts from the recommendations above, or from the extended reading list at the end of this booklet.

Title	Author	Comments <i>(did you enjoy it, why/why not, etc)</i>

If you require any further information, then you could visit the eduqas website and type in English Literature A-level or, alternatively, contact Mr Hardwick (Head of A Level English) at [t.hardwick@st-christophers.org](mailto:t.hardwick@st-christophers.org)

Please bring with you to our initial lesson in September an open mind and a thirst for knowledge. We very much look forward to seeing you.

## Extended Reading List

Title	Author	Synopsis
<b>Antigone</b>	Sophocles	One of the greatest of Greek tragedies. Read it and listen to the episode on Antigone from In Our Time on BBC Radio 4.
<b>Into the Woods</b>	John York	Non-fiction exploration of the forms, structures and themes of drama, from Greek tragedy to Hollywood romantic comedies.
<b>Mrs Dalloway (Virginia Woolf) is</b>	Virginia Woolf	A brief novel which features one day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway and offers an excellent example of early modernism.
<b>Rebecca</b>	Daphne du Maurier	A beautifully written early 20th Century Gothic romance novel.
<b>Silas Marner</b>	George Eliot	A relatively short, beautiful and moving example of 19th Century realist fiction.
<b>Slaughterhouse Five</b>	Kurt Vonnegut	A brief, memorable and moving post-modernist American novel.
<b>Tragedy: A Student Handbook</b>	Sean McEvoy	An accessible guide to the form and nature of tragedy.
<b>Wuthering Heights</b>	Emily Bronte	A 19th Century romance novel exploring romantic love.



**“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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