



TRANSITIONWORK
ENGLISH LITERATURE A-LEVEL



During your first year of A Level English Literature, you will be studying the works of some of the most prolific tragedians:

-William Shakespeare – ‘*Othello*’

-John Keats – ‘*La Belle Dame sans Merci*’, ‘*Isabella*’, ‘*Eve of St. Agnes*’ and ‘*Lamia*’

-Arthur Miller – ‘*Death of a Salesman*’

TASK ONE – RESEARCH

Your first task is to research these writers. Use a variety of sources and books to gather as much information as possible. See the topics below for guidance:

-Personal Life

-Politics / Beliefs

-Critical Reception (Especially to the works we are to study)

-Inspirations and Influences

-What type of tragedies they wrote

-How we have read them over time

(For example, what has changed in society that might change the way we read *Othello*?)

TASK TWO – UNDERSTANDING TRAGEDY

For the next two years, you will be studying texts through the lens of specific genres.

-Aspects of Tragedy

-Elements of Social and Political Protest Writing

Tragedy has a long history, which you may be somewhat familiar with from your study of Macbeth. You will need to know where the features of tragedy come from as well as the various aspects that shaped tragedy into the genre it was during Shakespeare's time.

One of the first philosophers to define the aspects of 'tragedy' was Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. He wrote a short text called 'Poetics' in which he outlined the key components of tragic narrative.

Read Aristotle's 'Poetics' (attached on website, or use the link below):

Link: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html>

Summarise Aristotle's definition of tragedy in a one-page summary poster.

TASK THREE – READING AND UNDERSTANDING OTHELLO

Othello by William Shakespeare is a very significant portion of your qualification. You will have to write TWO essays on the text during your final exam (1/5 of your overall qualification!)

Therefore you should read the full text over the summer break before you start in September.

Required edition:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1472571762/ref=redir_mobile_desktop?_encoding=UTF8&saaxitk=a391995a2aecab7232acd360954af386&hsa_cr_id=7201609130502&pd_rd_plhdr=t&pd_rd_r=26f56ec1-fdd7-4598-a34f-

[54ecd20e32c4&pd_rd_w=zK8JB&pd_rd_wg=gLCzm&ref_=sbx_be_s_sparkle_mcd_asin_0_img](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1472571762/ref=redir_mobile_desktop?_encoding=UTF8&saaxitk=a391995a2aecab7232acd360954af386&hsa_cr_id=7201609130502&pd_rd_plhdr=t&pd_rd_r=26f56ec1-fdd7-4598-a34f-54ecd20e32c4&pd_rd_w=zK8JB&pd_rd_wg=gLCzm&ref_=sbx_be_s_sparkle_mcd_asin_0_img)

- (*Othello*: Revised Edition (The Arden Shakespeare Third Series))
- ISBN-10 : 1472571762
- ISBN-13 : 978-1472571762

-Create a scene-by-scene summary.

-Watch as many film productions of the play as you can:

Free Youtube Link

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCdHpkXw_Tg

Othello (1995) starring Lawrence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh is also a very faithful adaptation.

TASK FOUR – WIDER READING

You are required to do a lot of independent reading around this subject, both for study and for pleasure. You will also have a coursework unit where you will be able to select a choice of text to write on. Here is a list of recommended reading to prepare you for the calibre of reading necessary at A Level Literature:

Pick three to read between now and starting the subject in September. You have a long summer ahead of you! Use it well!

Feminist Theory

The Bell Jar – Sylvia Plath (1963)

White Teeth – Zadie Smith (2000)

Frankenstein – Mary Shelley (1818)

The Bloody Chamber – Angela Carter (1979)

Tess of the D'Urbervilles – Thomas Hardy (1892)

Lady Chatterley's Lover – DH Lawrence (1928)

Marxist Theory

1984 – George Orwell (1949)

A Clockwork Orange – Anthony Burgess (1962)

Brave New World – Aldous Huxley (1932)

Remains of the Day – Kazuo Ishiguro (1989)

The Collector – John Fowles (1963)

North and South – Elizabeth Gaskell (1855)

Crime and Punishment – Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1866)

Post-colonial Theory

Burmese Days – George Orwell (1934)

Heart of Darkness – Joseph Conrad (1899)

A Passage to India – E.M. Forster (1924)

The Colour Purple – Alice Walker (1982)

Beloved – Toni Morrison (1987)

Eco-critical Theory

The Drowned World – J.G. Ballard (1962)

The Road – Cormac McCarthy (2006)

The Lord of the Rings – J.R.R. Tolkien (1954)

The Word of World is Forest – Ursula Le Guin (1972)

Annihilation – Jeff VanderMeer (2014)

Narrative Theory

Behind the Scenes at the Museum – Kate Atkinson (1995)

Enduring Love – Ian McEwan (1997)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – Robert Louis Stevenson's (1886)

Literary Value and the Canon

Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen (1813)

Wuthering Heights – Emily Brontë (1847)

Vanity Fair – William Thackeray (1848)

Middlemarch – George Eliot (1871-72)