

# Starting with confidence >>

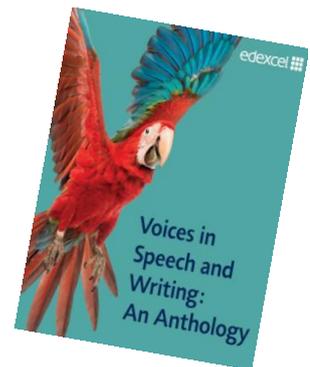
## English Language and Literature

On the English Language and Literature course, you will study a very wide range of spoken and written texts. It will be assumed that you like reading, and this is the best way to prepare yourself for the course!

A significant part of the course is devoted to the analysis of **non-fiction**. This means factual writing or speech, and is usually based on real-life events. It will help enormously if you are familiar with the different types of non-fiction.

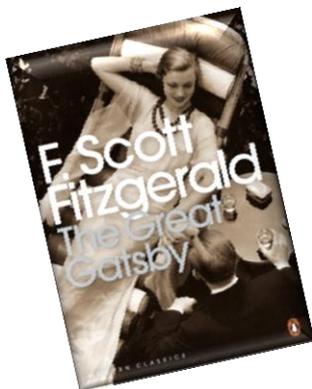
So, you might gather together examples of the following:

- travel writing
- autobiography
- published diary entries and memoirs
- famous public speeches
- transcripts of recorded conversations
- book, television and film reviews



Once you have a good range in your collection, try to take notes on how the writer (or speaker) of each text uses language which is appropriate for audience and purpose.

There are also three literature texts on the English Language and Literature course, and it would be a good idea to read at least two of them before you come to College.



For the A Level, you will have to write a comparative essay linking together F Scott Fitzgerald's famous novel *The Great Gatsby* with *Othello* by William Shakespeare.

*The Great Gatsby* was written in 1925, and is set in New York City during Prohibition, in what was known as the 'Roaring Twenties', or the 'Jazz Age'. It is important, when writing your essays, to use your knowledge of **social and historical contexts**, so after reading a few chapters from the novel, you should do some research into this fascinating era of American history.

There are many interesting websites which provide information about the 1920s and the life of the author, F Scott Fitzgerald. The

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book is considered to be a classic expression of the 'American Dream', and you should try to investigate the history of this key myth.

The recent film directed by Baz Luhrmann was very popular, and it follows the novel fairly closely. It is always useful to consider how the book and especially the presentation of the main character is reinterpreted for a modern audience, so watch the film and compare your impressions of the characters with how you respond to the book.

*Othello* is one of Shakespeare's most controversial and provocative tragedies, concerned with the themes of race, gender and being a social outsider. The story is about a black General in the Venetian army, Othello, who marries Desdemona, the young white daughter of a powerful politician. Othello has also used his power to give an important job in the army to his friend Cassio, rather than the man who thinks he deserved it, Iago.

If you want to find out what happens next, read the play! However, if you find it difficult to read Shakespeare's language without help, you can find simplified guides and translations of the original text on the internet. It also helps to watch the recent film versions. The film starring Kenneth Branagh and Laurence Fishburne is very clear and is often found on YouTube.

The final literature text is entitled *Translations*, by Brian Friel, and is set in Ireland in the early nineteenth century. It is about what happens when a local 'Gaelic' speaking community is confronted by a British project to translate Irish place-names into English.

You will need to know a bit about the history of Ireland to enjoy and understand the play properly, so it would be helpful to do some research into this troubled and interesting period.

