

Starting with confidence >>

English Literature

On the English Literature course, you will study a range of poetry, plays and novels. It will involve much reading, and some serious thinking, so this is the best way to prepare yourself for the course.

A significant part of the course is devoted to the analysis of the craft of **the writer at work**. This means thinking about the ways a poem, play or novel has been written as well as what it actually has to say.

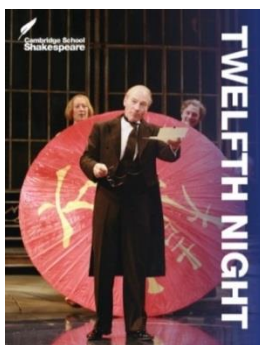
So, you might like to think again about some of the texts you have already read, either as part of your English lessons - or for your own pleasure:

You might like to think about:

- The ways this text has been presented to you: its form and structure
- The voice you can hear as you read it
- The imagery the writer has used and the ways this has been created
- The patterning of sounds the writer has used to create certain effects
- The particular words chosen by a writer and their possible reasons for this
- Other levels of meaning that may be at work beyond the most obvious one

You will be studying the following texts, and it would be a good idea to read at least two of them before you come to College.

For the drama part of the first year of the course you will begin with **Twelfth Night**. This is considered to be one of Shakespeare's greatest, and funniest, Comedies concerned with the themes of love, gender, class and disguise. The story is about a pair of twins who both survive a shipwreck without knowing the other has survived. Viola, the female twin, disguises herself as a man and endless dramatic and comic consequences follow.



If you want to find out what happens next, read the play; 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 filmed versions. The film of the Globe theatre's recent production starring Mark Rylance and Stephen Fry is very clear and exceptionally well-acted.

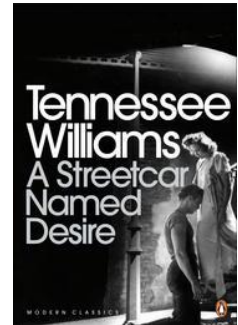
You will be reading this play alongside a collection of Critical Writing about Shakespeare's use of Comedy and "Twelfth Night". This is to help students prepare for the kind of work they might do on an English course at university. If you can find something written "about" Twelfth Night you will have made a start here.

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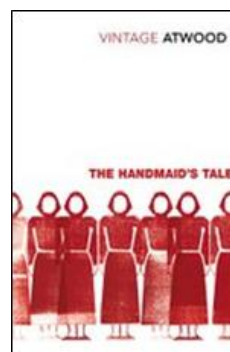
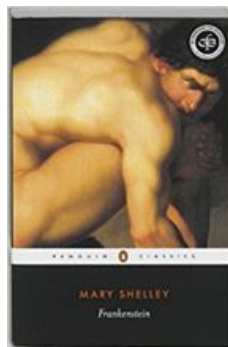
Later in the course you will move on to Tennessee Williams' classic study of the American South, "**A Streetcar Named Desire**".

The play is set in New Orleans in the time shortly after the Second World War. It is important, when studying and writing about this text to build up your knowledge of **social, historical and literary contexts** of this play; it was a fascinating period from which the American Civil Rights Movement would develop.

There are many interesting websites which provide information about this time and place and the life of the playwright, Tennessee Williams. The play is considered to be a classic in the development of modern theatre; you should try to investigate some of the reasons for this.



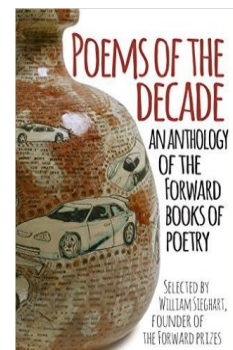
The two novels you will be studying are **Frankenstein** by Mary Shelley and **The Handmaid's Tale** by Margaret Atwood. The themes linking these two texts are Science and Society and we recommend you read **The Handmaid's Tale** first.



Your study of poetry will begin with a selection of twenty poems from The Forward books anthology, "Poems of the Decade 2002-2011". These provide an excellent introduction to the kind of poems that are being written today. An interesting place to begin exploring these, and what other young people think of them, is the AS English Literature Blog.

<https://blogasenglish.wordpress.com/>

Later in the course we will be moving on to study the work of John Donne, one of the fascinating group of poets who wrote what became known as *Metaphysical Poetry*, mostly during the 17th Century. His work can prove challenging to read at first, but he wrestles with many profound ideas that are still highly relevant to the way we live and think today. You may have already studied some of the metaphysical poets during your GCSE studies.



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You will also be doing a coursework component, probably towards the end of your first year. At present we “teach” two texts by the writer Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray” and “The Importance of Being Earnest” but there will be scope for you to negotiate titles and other texts should you have a particular desire to do so. It is therefore important, and helpful, to keep reading and thinking about texts beyond those studied directly in class.

Whilst we would like you to read some of the “classics” we are aware that there is a great deal of literature available to young people that is well-written and has interesting things to say. The important thing is to enjoy, and hopefully develop your own reading and think carefully about what you read.



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