

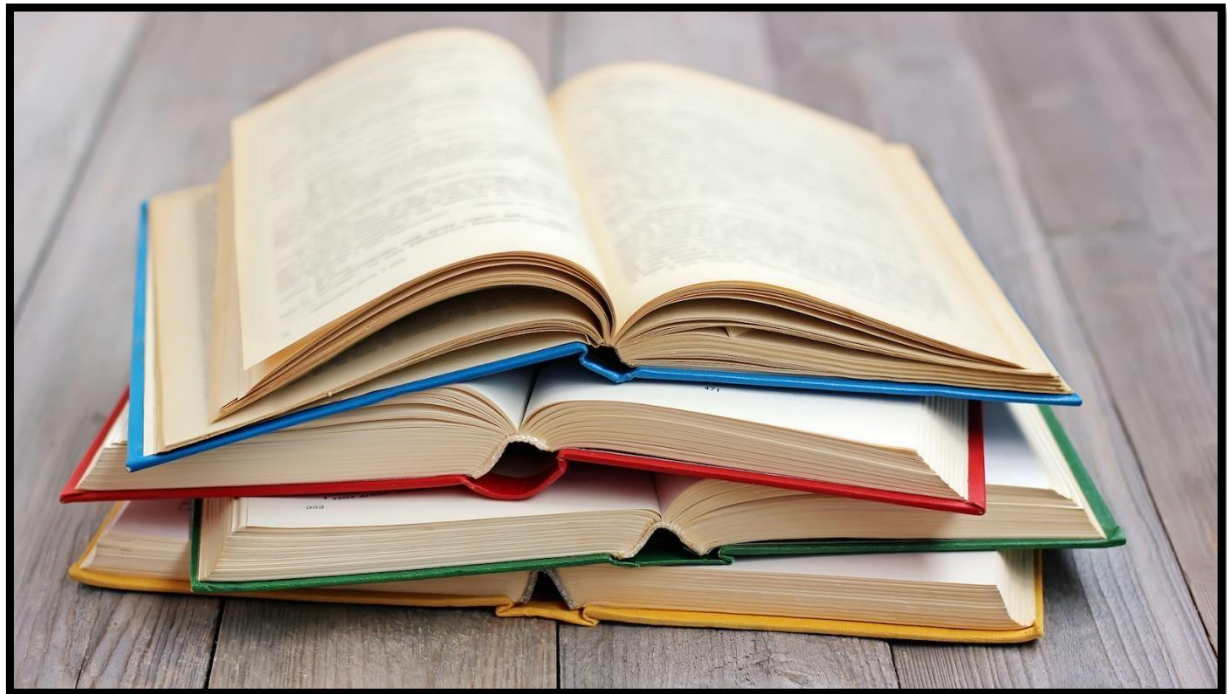
# THE DEANERY

Church of England High School and Sixth Form College



## Welcome to...

# A Level English Literature



## **Course Introduction**

Congratulations on completing your GCSE studies and welcome to A Level English Literature at The Deanery Sixth Form College.

This booklet provides an overview of the course and includes activities designed to help you in preparing to study English Literature at A Level.

As an English Literature student, you will develop the following skills:

- Critical thinking and analysis
- Independent study and research
- Essay writing
- Creative writing

The course builds on the skills you have acquired at GCSE. The best possible thing you can do to prepare for the course is to familiarise yourself with the texts that will be studied in Year One. These are:

- *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller
- *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy

Read the texts and familiarise yourself with the plot, characters and themes. We will study each text in more detail in September.

There is a list of suggested reading included for each text in this booklet. This list is by no means compulsory or essential and is only included as a guide should you wish to explore any of the texts in more detail this summer.

Enjoy your summer and arrive fresh and motivated in September!

## Course Overview:

### AQA A Level English Literature Spec B (7717)

Paper 1: Y13  Literary Genres – <b>Aspects of Tragedy</b>	40%	Exam: 2 hours 30 mins 3 Tasks (25 marks each) Closed Book	Texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Othello</i> by William Shakespeare</li><li>• <i>Death of a Salesman</i> by Arthur Miller</li><li>• <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> by Thomas Hardy</li></ul>
Paper 2: Y13  Texts and Genres: <b>Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing</b>	40%	Exam: 3 hours 3 Tasks (25 marks each) Clean Open Book	Texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood</li><li>• <i>The Kite Runner</i> by Khaled Hosseini</li><li>• <i>Songs of Innocence and Experience</i> by William Blake</li></ul>
Non-Exam Assessment: Y13 <b>Theory &amp; Independence</b>	20%	Coursework:  2 tasks (25 marks each) 1250-1500 words each	Texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Study of 2 texts – one prose and one poetry</li><li>• AQA Critical Anthology</li></ul>

### Assessment Objectives

**AO1:** Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

**AO2:** Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

**AO3:** Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

**AO4:** Explore connections across literary texts.

**AO5:** Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations

**TASK 1:** Look at these quotes about reading and Literature. Annotate them with your thoughts and ideas:

“The best moments in reading are when you come across something – a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things – which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours.”

**Alan Bennett- *The History Boys***

“A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say.”

**Italo Calvino- *The Uses of Literature***

“That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.” **-F. Scott Fitzgerald**

“Genuine poetry can communicate before it's understood.” **-T S Eliot**

**Task 2:** Over the course of the two years, you will learn an extensive range of technical terms. Over the summer, start to build your knowledge and understanding of these by creating a glossary in your own words.

**Literary Terms Glossary:**

<b>Allegory</b>	
<b>Allusion</b>	
<b>Alter Ego</b>	
<b>Analepsis</b>	
<b>Analogy</b>	
<b>Anaphora</b>	
<b>Anthropomorphism</b>	
<b>Antithesis</b>	
<b>Archetype</b>	
<b>Bathos</b>	
<b>Bildungsroman</b>	
<b>Byronic Hero</b>	
<b>Catharsis</b>	
<b>Characterisation</b>	
<b>Conceit</b>	
<b>Connotation</b>	
<b>Denotation</b>	

<b>Diction</b>	
<b>Doppelganger</b>	
<b>Dramatic Irony</b>	
<b>Dramatic Monologue</b>	
<b>Enjambment</b>	
<b>Epilogue</b>	
<b>Epithet</b>	
<b>Epistolary Novel</b>	
<b>Euphemism</b>	
<b>Fable</b>	
<b>Foil</b>	
<b>Genre</b>	
<b>Hyperbole</b>	
<b>Imagery</b>	
<b>Intertextuality</b>	
<b>Irony</b>	
<b>Juxtaposition</b>	
<b>Meter</b>	
<b>Mood</b>	

<b>Motif</b>	
<b>Omniscient Narrator</b>	
<b>Oxymoron</b>	
<b>Parable</b>	
<b>Parallelism</b>	
<b>Paradox</b>	
<b>Parody</b>	
<b>Pathetic fallacy</b>	
<b>Prologue</b>	
<b>Protagonist</b>	
<b>Pun</b>	
<b>Rhyme Scheme</b>	
<b>Rhythm</b>	
<b>Satire</b>	
<b>Sematic Field</b>	
<b>Soliloquy</b>	
<b>Stream of Consciousness</b>	
<b>Symbol</b>	
<b>Syntax</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	

<b>Tone</b>	
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As a student of Literature, you will also need to become a critical, active reader. Unlike at GCSE, you will be expected to take responsibility for your own learning with support from your teachers who can facilitate your learning. You will be expected to develop a personal response to the texts we study and to form an educated opinion of your own that you will then communicate and debate. There are only a certain number of ways to interpret a text, but students need to be able to arrive at their own independent conclusions, therefore the most interesting literature is ambiguous and open to debate.

**TASK 3** : Take a look at this poem by William Blake:

**The Sick Rose**

O Rose, thou art sick;  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night  
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy;  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.

The symbol of 'the sick rose' can be interpreted in several ways. Think about each of the interpretations below and jot down your thoughts next to each one.

Interpretation:	My thoughts on this interpretation:
Literal meaning of the flower (gardening)	
A Person (whose name is Rose)	
England (in terms of historical/political issues)	
England (in terms of Industrialisation)	
Comment on male power (feminist interpretation)	



Unrequited love	
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1. You may also have a different interpretation of your own. What is your interpretation of the imagery in this poem? What do you think it is about? (You may use ideas from the table if you wish.)

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2. What factors might influence a person's interpretation – what things might influence the way you interpret a poem or text?

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**Task 6:** The first thing you will study in Y12 will be ASPECTS OF TRAGEDY, looking at the key texts of *Othello* by William Shakespeare, *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy. Read this article below and highlight key points.

*Here Carol Atherton introduces the idea of tragedy, exploring what makes tragedy in drama different from our everyday uses of the word and outlining some of the key ideas that have shaped it as a form, from the classical through to the modern period.*

### **Defining Tragedy - Drama from Classical to Modern Period**

If you're doing the AQA Specification B in English Literature, one of the things you'll learn during your course is that 'tragedy' has another, more specific, set of meanings. This specification requires you to write about 'the dramatic/tragic genre' with regard to two plays, one of which must have been written by Shakespeare. So, you'll need to learn what 'tragedy' is, and how these definitions relate to the plays you're studying. This article will give you an overview of the genre of tragedy, and some of the concepts that are central to it.

#### **Aristotle on tragedy**

One name you're bound to come across when you study tragedy is that of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aristotle lived in the fourth century BCE, and set out a famous definition of tragedy in his work *The Poetics*, a fragment of a longer treatise. His intention was not to prescribe a set of rules for dramatists to follow, but rather to describe the characteristics of the tragic dramas that he had seen, including works by the three great Ancient Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles. Nevertheless, his definition of tragedy has become a staple of literary criticism, and has been used and reinterpreted by writers through the ages. So what did Aristotle say?

For Aristotle, the power of tragedy rested on the relationship between plot, character and audience. Central to his definition of tragedy is the tragic hero, a man 'who enjoys Prosperity and a high reputation.' Often, this hero was a king, or a man with the potential to achieve greatness. The action of the tragedy focuses on the hero's downfall from this initial high status, in a reversal of fortune that Aristotle termed *peripeteia*. Crucially, this downfall is not the result of chance or accident, but is brought about by an act carried out by the hero that sets in motion the chain of events that will lead to his eventual death. Aristotle's term for this act was *hamartia*. (Later writers, such as the critic A.C. Bradley, have interpreted the concept of *hamartia* slightly differently, as a 'fatal flaw' or 'fundamental tragic trait' within the hero's character: Macbeth's ambition, say, or Othello's jealousy.) What gives tragedy its particular power is that at some point before his death, the hero experiences a moment of insight or *anagnorisis* when he recognises what he has done and gains a new perspective on

the truths of human existence. The effect on the audience is one that Aristotle termed catharsis - a purging of the emotions that draws out feelings of pity and fear. Critics have written eloquently about the effects of this process of catharsis.

A.C. Bradley commented that in watching tragedy:

*we realise the full power and reach of the soul, and the conflict on which it engages acquires that magnitude which stirs not only sympathy and pity, but admiration, terror, and awe.*

There are two other aspects of Aristotle's theory of tragedy that will be important to your study of tragic drama. The first is that of the unities of plot, place and time - the notion that the effects of the tragedy are intensified if the action has one main focus, takes place in one location and happens within a restricted period of time. The second is that of the chorus, a group of people who appear onstage to interpret and narrate parts of the plot for the audience. In Greek tragedy, the chorus danced and sang, with its songs being divided into different sections according to the direction in which the actors danced. Later tragedies interpret the role of the chorus in different ways: in some plays you might be able to identify a single character who acts as the chorus, while in others this role is fulfilled by a number of minor characters who offer a commentary on the action.

### **Later ideas**

Over the centuries, the genre of tragedy has been developed and adapted by other writers. The Roman tragedies of Seneca (1st century CE) were more violent and bloody than their Greek counterparts, with vivid images of hell and a strong sense of horror. Later writers focused on the plight of the tragic hero, looking at his situation from a more philosophical standpoint. The French dramatist Jean Racine (1639-99) saw the tragic situation as one in which the hero was doomed to be dissatisfied because he was constantly longing for something beyond his reach. Writers such as Georg Hegel (1770-1831), Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) proposed a tragic theory of life implying that all people exist in a state of anguish and despair, with these feelings being increased by our recognition of this situation. And in the twentieth century, a number of playwrights challenged the notion that the tragic hero should be a person of 'high degree', relocating the genre in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is perhaps the greatest example of the sub-genre of 'domestic tragedy': its hero Willy Loman exemplifies the sense of angst that is so crucial to modern definitions of the genre. (Notice, too, how his surname bears witness to his ordinariness and lack of status.)

