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**ENGLISH LITERATURE A LEVEL**

**Course handbook & Pre-course tasks**

**2023 - 2025**

**Course Outline**

The specification can be accessed <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-2015.html>

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Content Overview** | **Assessment Overview** | |
| Component 1: Drama   * One Shakespeare play and one other drama from either tragedy or comedy.   Paper Code 9ET0/01 | Section A: Shakespeare  Section B: other drama  60 marks (Section A 35 marks; Section B 25 marks)  Open book  2 hours and 15 minutes | 30% of total A level |
| Component 2: Prose   * Two prose texts from a theme (chosen by teaching staff). At least one will be pre-1900.   Paper Code 9ET0/02 | Answer ONE comparative essay question from a choice of two (on studied theme).  40 marks  Open book  1 hour and 15 minutes | 20% of total A level |
| Component 3: Poetry   * A selection of post-2000 poetry * Either a literary period, or a named poet from within a literary period (chosen by teaching staff).   Paper Code 9ET0/03 | Section A: Post-2000 poetry comparative essay (unseen + studied poem)  Section B: one essay on studied literary period or poet  60 marks (Section A 30 marks; Section B 30 marks)  Open book  2 hours and 15 minutes | 30% of total A level |
| Non-examination assessment  Comparative study of two texts (student choice).  May be poetry, prose, drama or literary non-fiction.  Paper Code 9ET0/04 | Extended comparative essay: 2500-3000 words  60 marks | 20% of total A level |

**How the course is delivered**

Lessons will take place in a classroom environment with students working individually, in pairs and in group discussions. Integrated in the course are revision, consolidation, extension and regular exam practice. Students will undertake wider reading and independent tasks to support and inform classroom activities.

**Faculty Expectations – Resources**

* You will require a lever-arch folder and file dividers, which you must bring to the first lesson in September. Students are expected to present notes and responses appropriately. During the course all marked work and printed resources must be added to the correct section of your folder. These folders will be checked by teachers throughout the course.
* Students are expected to have the correct stationery for lessons including pens, pencils, glue, scissors and highlighters.
* Students are expected to purchase a copy of each of the set texts to annotate and highlight key areas during study. These texts may be ordered and purchased through local bookshops, or are available on internet bookshop sites such as Waterstones, WH Smiths or Amazon.

**The Year 12 texts are:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus (Wordsworth Classics) | *Frankenstein*  Mary Shelley  Wordsworth Classics  ISBN-10 185 326 0231 | The Handmaid's Tale | *The Handmaid’s Tale*  Margaret Atwood  ISBN-10 0099740915  Vintage |
| https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/41MGttqHaEL._SX323_BO1,204,203,200_.jpg | A Streetcar Named Desire  Tennessee Williams  ISBN-10 1408106043  Methuen Drama | Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry | *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002–2011*  Faber and Faber, 2015 ISBN 978-0571325405 |

**HOME STUDY STRUCTURE**

**For every hour of lesson, it is expected students dedicate an hour to independent study time. Home study will be set using the following sections:**

**Reading** – You are expected to read your set texts, critical essays and articles, contextual materials and wider reading of fiction, drama and/or poetry to enable you to make appropriate choices in your coursework. Wider reading boxes and discussion will support you.

**Gaps to close** – You act upon feedback, close the gaps in your learning e.g. writing a summary, re-answering test questions underperformed in; producing a glossary of key terms; mark scheme mnemonics; re-reading and extending lesson notes; practice testing; creating model answers or annotated mark schemes.

**Revision** – Creating revision resources based upon what was taught in the lesson. E.g. mind map, flash card, lists, learning key word definitions.

**Assessed Designated Study Tasks** – Teacher-set tasks which will be self/peer/teacher assessed depending upon what the teacher directs. These tasks are to be completed in designated study time and reflected upon in DIRT/ starter tasks once the deadline has passed. This could also include a flipped learning task (See Pre-work below).

**Pre-work** - Flipped learning – research undertaken ready for the next lessons content or extension work.

**It is your responsibility to ask for help if it is needed.**

**EXAMINATION PERIODS**

* Internal progress check tests are integrated during the course
* Internal examination dates are listed on the school calendar
* Course Work Assessment – on-going during the course. Deadline: February half-term 2025
* External examination – May/June of Year 13

**SUMMER TRANSITION WORK HAND IN WEEK: 11th – 15th SEPTEMBER**

**Task 1: Be practical**

Purchase a copy of the four texts shown in the table on page 3. It is helpful if everyone has the same version of the text as we study, so look for the front covers and ISBN numbers shown in the table when you buy or order.

Buy a lever-arch file and file dividers. Prepare your file by labelling your file dividers as follows:

1. Subject Information (Induction week)
2. MOCK EXAMS/IN-CLASS ASSESSMENTS & FEEDBACK
3. DRAMA – Shakespeare
4. DRAMA – *A Streetcar Named Desire*
5. DRAMA – *Critical Anthology*
6. PROSE – *Frankenstein*
7. PROSE – *The Handmaid’s Tale*
8. POETRY – *Poems of the Decade*
9. POETRY – Christina Rossetti *Selected Poems*
10. PAST PAPERS, MARK SCHEMES, EXAMINER REPORTS
11. NON-EXAMINATION ASSESSMENT
12. OTHER NOTES/LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

**Task 2: Create a glossary (Print and put in**

* Complete the definitions for all the terms you used in your study of poetry at GCSE.
* CHALLENGE: research and fill in the definitions for TEN terms that are unfamiliar to you.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Poetry Key Terminology**  **“Students will necessarily explore the poetic methods chosen by poets to convey meaning: poetic structure, poetic imagery and sound effects.” (AQA)** | |
| **FORM** | |
| **Ballad** |  |
| **Blazon** |  |
| **Concrete** |  |
| **Dramatic Monologue** |  |
| **Elegy** |  |
| **Epic** |  |
| **Free Verse** |  |
| **Lyric** |  |
| **Narrative Poem** |  |
| **Parody** |  |
| **Pastiche** |  |
| **Sonnet** |  |
| **STRUCTURE** | |
| **Analepsis** |  |
| **Anti-climax** |  |
| **Bathos** |  |
| **Caesura** |  |
| **Chronological** |  |
| **Climax** |  |
| **Contrast** |  |
| **Couplet** |  |
| **Cyclical** |  |
| **End-stopped** |  |
| **Enjambment** |  |
| **Juxtaposition** |  |
| **Linear** |  |
| **Motif** |  |
| **Octave** |  |
| **Prolepsis** |  |
| **Quatrain** |  |
| **Refrain** |  |
| **Repetition** |  |
| **Sestet** |  |
| **Shift** |  |
| **Stanza** |  |
| **Tercet** |  |
| **IMAGERY** | |
| **Abstract Image** |  |
| **Conceit** |  |
| **Concrete Image** |  |
| **Diction** |  |
| **Imagery** |  |
| **Metaphor** |  |
| **Pathetic Fallacy** |  |
| **Personification** |  |
| **Simile** |  |
| **Symbol** |  |
| **SOUND** | |
| **Alliteration** |  |
| **Assonance** |  |
| **Foot** |  |
| **Hard consonants** |  |
| **Iamb** |  |
| **Iambic Pentameter** |  |
| **Long vowels** |  |
| **Metre** |  |
| **Onomatopoeia** |  |
| **Pace** |  |
| **Plosives** |  |
| **Rhyme** |  |
| **Rhythm** |  |
| **Short vowels** |  |
| **Sibilance** |  |
| **Soft consonants** |  |
| **Tone** |  |
| **Voice** |  |

**Task 3 – The Art of the Essay**

We know that essays are what you write in English. But, beyond knowing they are the way you show your knowledge in an English exam, what is an essay? And can its meaning outside the classroom help us write better essays inside the classroom (and get more enjoyment from doing it)?

* Spend a couple of minutes jotting down what you think an essay is. (Does it have anything in common with a review, for example? Does it have to answer a question? Can you write an essay about anything?)
* Now read these short definitions of the essay:
  + Essay is derived from the French word *essayer*, which means ‘to attempt’ or ‘to try’.
  + A short form of literary composition based on a single subject matter, and often gives the personal opinion of the author.
  + A famous English essayist, Aldous Huxley defines essays as, “A literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything.”
  + A short piece of writing on a particular subject. OED
  + A scholarly work in writing that provides the author’s personal argument.
  + A short piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one done by students as part of the work for a course.
  + Essays are how we speak to one another in print — caroming thoughts not merely in order to convey a certain packet of information, but with a special edge or bounce of personal character in a kind of public letter. (Edward Hoagland, Introduction, The Best American Essays: 1999)
* The novelist and essayist Blake Morrison explores the art of essay in ‘A Loose Sally of the Mind’, an article published in *emagazine*. In itself it is a great example of what the essay can do.
* Have a go at reading his essay (pg. 10) – don’t panic if feels like a bit of a challenge. Read it slowly, read it out loud, write out short quotations which grab your attention or which interest you.
* Dip your toe into the world of the essay by reading (bits of) some really brilliant examples of the form. Try to think about which ones you like, which ones you want to carry on reading, which ones help you discover something new or understand something better. How much is it to do with the subject matter? How much is it to do with the style and voice of the essay?
* The ideas below are just suggestions to get you started. If while browsing these you spot another essay title that intrigues you, read it instead.
  + Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: “Beware Of Feminist Lite” From We Should All Be Feminists  
    <https://ideas.ted.com/Beware-Of-Feminism-Lite>
  + Zavi Kang Engles: My Mother’s Tongue

<https://therumpus.net/2019/04/My-Mothers-Tongue/>

* + George Orwell: Politics of the English Language  
    <https://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit>
  + Zadie Smith: Some Notes On Atunement  
    <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/17/some-notes-on-attunement>
* Now read a short extract from Professor Judy Simon’s chapter on the essay in *The Literature Reader*, EMC’s book for A Level students (pg. 14).
* It’s now over to you to join the long tradition of essay writers. Choose a topic – it might be related to a book you’ve read, but it doesn’t have to be. Think about what you liked in the essays you dipped into. Imagine your reader. And have an ‘essai’ at an essay.

**A Loose Sally of the Mind – Putting Forward Bright Ideas in English Literature Essays**

**Writer, academic and critic Blake Morrison discusses the nature of the English literature essay, going back to the original meaning of the word to discover just how exploratory, tentative and personal it’s meant to be.**

For most students, an essay is something imposed on them rather than something they choose to do. You might hear someone say ‘I’ve been writing a poem’ or ‘I’ve been writing a story’, as if these were pleasurable and freely chosen activities, but if someone tells you they’ve been writing an essay it’ll usually be with a groan – the essay will have been set as homework, to be done as duty, rather than as a means of self-expression. But essays – even literary essays – can be as personal to write, as pleasurable to read and as creative as poems or novels. And they’re no less a matter of expressing yourself and offering your personal take on the world.

**Trying Something Out**

‘To essay’ something – the verb, that is – means to try something out, to have a go. And the noun

‘essay’ suggests an attempt or endeavour. In his famous Dictionary, Samuel Johnson defines the essay as

“a loose sally of the mind, an irregular indigested piece, not a regular and orderly composition.”

Of course, when teachers come to mark essays, they do look for order of some kind, the sense of an

argument being put forward in a clear and logical fashion. Still, I think Dr Johnson is right – the best

essays put forward a bright idea or series of bright ideas, not fully formed perhaps, but stimulating and provocative. An essay isn’t the last word. It’s tentative, personal and subjective: ‘Here’s what I think – how about you?’

The most famous exponent of the essay is perhaps the French 16th-century writer Michel de

Montaigne, who described his essays as attempts to show ‘some traits of my character’. They also

expressed his thoughts on politics, religion, morality, love, sex, parenthood, death and much besides. But they were unashamedly personal and this was what made them radical. We tend to think of essays as impersonal. When I was doing A Levels, and then again at university, the use of the first person pronoun was discouraged. You were meant to be objective, which meant adopting a style that was neutral, beige or passive. But essays can’t help but be subjective. And the original model for them, Montaigne’s, was candid, open, not afraid to say ‘I’.

After all, it’s your engagement with the text that matters. You do need to be aware of what others

think of that text – critics, reviewers, your teacher, your fellow students, the way in which that text

was received when it came out and has been received since. But it’s what you bring to that text that

matters – your own ideas and responses. Talking about its structure, or its themes, or use of

metaphor, or characterisation, all this is also a way of saying how it affects you. And if it hasn’t

affected you, if it’s left you cold, that too is something to explore.

**Orwell and Early 20th-century Essays**

The literary essay had its heyday in the early 20th century, with writers like D. H. Lawrence, Ezra

Pound, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster. Topping all of them was George Orwell. In the

current era of post-truth, newspeak and double-think Orwell is essential reading – a man who can

help us see through the lies and sham, a man to guide us through the labyrinth of war, post-colonialism, Brexit and Donald Trump. My favourite essay of his is called ‘A Hanging’. It recounts an

experience he had as a young man while serving in the police force in Burma, at a time when he was already beginning to question the ethics of colonialism. The essay brilliantly describes the scene of the hanging: the guards, the condemned man (whose offence we are never told), a dog that bounds into the yard where the hanging is due to take place and disrupts the proceedings. For most of the essay, Orwell doesn’t comment on the morality of capital punishment. But when he notices the prisoner step aside to avoid getting his feet wet in a puddle, even though he has only minutes left to live, Orwell suddenly realises how immoral it is to take another person’s life for any reason, even by way of punishment. Of course, the thought may have occurred to him before. The essay is as carefully shaped, and as artful, as any short story. But there’s a sense of discovery in it – as though it’s through the act of recalling the event, and writing about it, that Orwell is working out what he really thinks. In creative writing showing always works better than telling. And it’s by showing what happened, rather than preaching and pontificating, that Orwell gets his point across.

Of course, Orwell’s essay tells a story and it’s based in life. Critical essays can’t do that. They engage

with texts. But when Orwell writes about Gulliver’s Travels, or boys’ comics, or the poetry of the

1930s, or the idiocy of Tolstoy’s criticism of Shakespeare’s King Lear, you still hear that same voice –

of somebody not afraid to have his own thoughts, even if they’re out of step with current opinion.

Above all, there’s a sense that he’s connecting the books he writes about with his own life, his own

experiences, his own ideas about the world. And you don’t have to be in your twenties, thirties and

forties to do that. If a sentence in a novel resonates with you, or the line of a poem rings true for

some reason, or you come across a simile or metaphor that sends shivers down your spine, then

that’s worth writing about: it’s what the poet or novelist hoped when he or she set down those words – not that their text would be studied for exams, but that someone would be emotionally moved or intellectually provoked by it.

**The Extinction of the Essay?**

In a recent article for the Guardian, the American novelist Jonathan Franzen suggests that what

defines the essay – the expression of opinions or the narrating of personal experiences (or some

combination of the two) – is now a staple of social media: of blogs, of posts, of tweets. He asks:

“Should we be mourning the essay’s extinction? Or should we be celebrating its conquest of the

larger culture?”

It’s a good question, but I don’t think that essays and tweets are comparable. That’s not just because the most famous tweeter in the world – the man who’s given Twitter a bad name – is Donald Trump or because 140 or even 280 characters are too minimal to be called essayistic. It’s because tweets allow little room for nuance. They’re assertions not explorations – and exploring is what the essay does best. Blogs are a better comparison: as first-hand testimonies of thoughts, opinions and experiences set down by one person for other people to read, they’re the equivalent of essays. And however opinionated, blogs are often vulnerable, tentative and deeply personal – again just like essays.

**Criticism, Judgement and Celebration**

At one point in Samuel Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot, the two main characters, Vladimir and

Estragon, exchange insults – ‘vermin’, ‘moron’, ‘sewer rat’ and ‘cretin’. The ultimate, unanswerable

insult they come up with is ‘crritic’. The word ‘criticism’ (like the word ’essay’) has negative

associations. But literary criticism doesn’t preclude positivity: passion, enthusiasm and celebration. It’s about championing books by showing what makes them tick far more than it’s about attacking them or doing them down. Honest judgment is what we look for in criticism – reasoned, nuanced but personal judgement. Critical essays may be parasitic – they exist in relation to the literature they’re feeding off – but they can also be an art-form in themselves. What we value in them is wit, passion, intelligence, provocation, enjoyment – the same qualities we look for in a novel or poem.

Of course, hatchet jobs can be fun too, when someone takes on an established name and calls his or her bluff. But it’s a different kind of fun I’m thinking of – the fun of finding new things in a classic text or of finding new ways to talk about that text, through the insights of feminism, or environmentalism, or politics, or simply from personal experience. Books might exist physically as objects without even being opened, but they don’t truly exist till someone reads them. The author Alberto Manguel has said that

“All writing depends on the generosity of the reader”

– the text gives to us and we bring something to it in return. Your task when writing a literary essay is to interpret, explain, elucidate, make sense – but also to connect the book you’re reading to your

own life. Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur the Roman poet Horace wrote:

“Change the name and the story is about you.”

Classic texts tell stories that seem to be our stories, as though written just for us. And that’s why we, in turn, write about them.

In short, there’s nothing weird or elitist or negative about the act of criticism. It’s as natural as

breathing. It’s what we all do when we’ve seen a film, or heard a new album: ‘What did you think of it? I thought this.’ And we back up our thoughts by reference to a particular scene or song, and argue our corner against those who disagree with us. That’s the basis of the critical essay. And it can be inventive, it can be creative, it can be passionate. Most importantly, whether you use the I-word or not, it has to bear your stamp – it has to have your personality at its heart.

*Article Written By: Blake Morrison is a writer of fiction, poetry, non-fiction, journalism and literary criticism. He is Professor of Creative Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London.*

*4/23/2020 English & Media Centre | Articles | emagazine*

*https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/e-magazine/articles/28512 4/4*

*This article first appeared in emagazine 80, April 2018.*

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**The Art of the Essay (emagplus)**

**In this extract from EMC’s The Literature Reader, Judy Simons explores the essay in the digital age – and provides some practical tips.**

The critical essay does not conform to a single format which has to be rigidly adhered to. Like other

literary genres, it is a flexible medium, a creative space in which academics, students, authors and

general readers can share opinions. Literary experience is not constant but changes over time, and

modern essays are generous in acknowledging the diversity of readers and their backgrounds. […]

‘The great enemy of clear language is insincerity,’ wrote George Orwell. ‘When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting ink’. Orwell’s Inside the Whale (1940) is both a classic example and a clear-sighted assessment of the art of writing critical essays. Wide-ranging in scope, beautifully structured, eschewing jargon or complicated terminology, it addresses its central subject head on. Its insistence on clarity and honesty is sound advice. Believe in what you are saying and do not try to dress up your ideas in highbrow language or rely on clichés.

There are many student guides on the market which provide a template for essay-writing. Websites

such as essaydragon.com advise on the different stages of planning, structure and style while a

number of university English departments publish online handbooks, which contain excellent

practical pointers. There are also helpful YouTube videos, which take you through the composition

process step by step. Yet because an essay should always be personal, there can be no absolute

prototype. It is helpful to remember that the verb ‘to essay’ also means ‘to try’. Your essay is a means of testing out ideas and polishing the techniques used to structure them.

My own top five tips are:

1.Know your subject. This relies on reading the text for yourself. At A Level you may feel that

you have done this exhaustively. Yet, understanding is also about engaging with that text, the

story it tells, and whether or not it has the power to speak directly to you as a reader, not just

via your teacher. Literature that is set for A Level has usually been selected for its complexity

and its potential to enlighten or affect your thinking. So, read and read again!

2. Conduct research. This does not necessarily involve seeking out obscure primary sources,

although reading Keats’s letters or Mary Shelley’s 1831 introduction to Frankenstein will offer

considerable insights into their works. Rather it means reading around the text,

understanding the contexts, including its literary history, and knowing what other

commentators have said. Writing an essay is not an isolated activity. When you embark on it,

you are entering an ongoing debate about literature, including with other students and with

academic critics, whose ideas will help inspire your own. Remember that there is no ‘correct’

interpretation of a text and that it is perfectly acceptable to disagree with others’ opinions.

This is an important step in articulating your own position.

3. Answer the question. Most essay topics offer a deceptively simple proposition that demands

a more subtle answer; for example, ‘How far do you agree with the view that in King Lear,

Goneril and Regan are victims rather than villains?’. Your essay should of course sustain a

focus on these two characters and the scenes in which they appear. But the phrasing also

invites a review of the primary value system embedded in the action, such as the human and

social values of family, respect for order, filial obedience, love, charity and kingship. How do

Shakespeare’s dramatic methods, the juxtaposition with Gloucester’s family or the

positioning of Lear’s speeches excoriating his daughters fit into the play’s exploration of

power? Is there really scope for ambiguity here? Don’t forget that the best essays show

evidence of an enquiring mind so you should not be shy about using question marks.

4. Structure your argument. Where an author can be equivocal or abstruse, the critic should be

aiming to be clear and to untangle. Planning what you are going to say is essential. You may

find that as you make notes on your reading, your proposition evolves in unexpected ways.

The key is to organise your points into a logical format that supports your main case. This

avoids your ideas spilling out onto the page in a random sequence that results in a disjointed

or rambling piece of work. In a comparison piece, for example, you should aim to keep your

paragraphs balanced alternately between the texts. Remember too to keep to the prescribed

word count. Do not make the mistake of thinking that the more you write the more

compelling your thesis will be.

5. Provide the evidence. Every claim you make must be underpinned by reference to the text or

to relevant contexts. This is what makes your line of reasoning convincing. You need to be

selective about the material you use, but if you have followed points 1-4 above, this should

come naturally. Quotations from the text underpin and strengthen your interpretation. They

can be used alongside any background information you have, for example about the cultural

climate in which a writer’s work was produced and the literary conventions of the day. Do

not make the mistake of expecting characters in a Victorian novel to behave according to

twenty-first century codes. It is the judicious use of reference to characters, scenes, authorial

voice and imagery that will ensure your essay comes alive.

**The Essay in the Age of Digital Technology**

Digital technology has opened up a massive literary resource. It provides access for researchers to a

range of materials which were once available only in a specialist library, such as copies of original

manuscripts, out of print books and articles and biographical or historical information. It allows for

new scholarship and literary discoveries that contribute to the essay’s intervention in an evolving live debate.

Wikipedia, Google and other search engines can, however, tempt a reader towards simplistic analysis. A work of literature amounts to more than its surface narrative or plot synopsis. The internet is seductive because it appears to be comprehensive but its information is only as reliable as the person who posted it, and not all online views are equally valid. A critical perspective located via Google can range from incisive analysis by a learned scholar to a barely literate high school essay on Jane Eyre, such as some of those on the Bartleby website. Surfing the internet requires scrupulous discrimination on the part of the consumer, and it should never, ever be used as a sales outlet from which to purchase ready-made, supposedly bespoke coursework essays.

On the plus side, digital media have created a new approach to essay writing, with online magazines such as Electric Lit offering alternative publishing outlets. A whole blogosphere has emerged, populated by enthusiastic litbloggers, who exchange views, reviews and mini-essays. Blogging, where typical posts are between 800 and 1500 words, affords a spirited, democratic space for literary discussion. As one commentator has noted, ‘it does more than an essay because of its playfulness’. Yet its explosive growth has sparked controversy, with some, such as one chair of the Man Booker judges, claiming that blogging will only result in the ‘detriment of literature’. Check out the regularly updated Literature Blogs UK Top 10 and make up your own mind.

Rarely do blogs follow the accepted conventions of critical essay writing. They are more casual,

allowing for impromptu, open-ended observations that reaffirm a collective passion for literature.

They can be quirky, playful or angry. They challenge the specialised rhetoric of the literati and what

some see as an ivory tower complacency. Yet many academics, authors and teachers are themselves active bloggers, who find in the blog release from academic conventions and who know they can reach new audiences with a speed and directness that gives their views both currency and

significance.

Readers live in the contemporary moment, and the power of present-day media shapes both textual meaning and production. Technology has opened up a world in which literary experience is not confined to the traditional print format. This is why the essay remains such a dynamic form,

constantly renewing itself with each external stimulus. Do not give up on its rewards.

*This extract is taken from EMC’s The Literature Reader, a collection of articles by leading academics*

*and writers on a wide range of topics from modernism and experimental literature to Shakespeare*

*and the contemporary novel.*

*Article Written By: Judy Simons is a Research Fellow at the University of London and Emeritus*

*Professor of English at de Montfort.*

*This article was first published in emagplus for emagazine 88, April 2020.*

*Print*

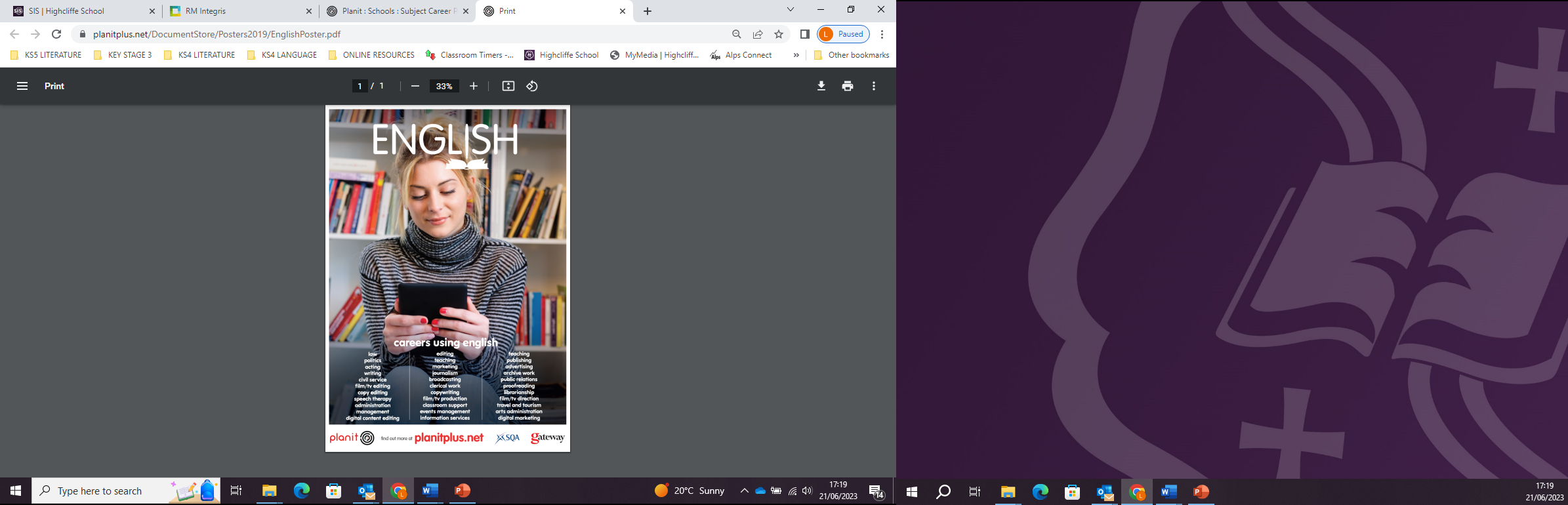
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**Task 4 – Take a risk with your reading**

Take a risk with your reading. What sort of books do you usually read for pleasure? If you always read the same sort of novel or the same author or have got stuck in a rut of not knowing what next to read, why not try to read something completely different? Always read novels? Why not try a graphic novel? Always read horror? Why not try a novel written in verse?

* How to find your new read:
* Look at EMC’s list of great 21st century reads for 6th formers:  
  <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/blog/50-great-21st-century-novels-for-6th-formers>
* Ask friends. Ask the people you know have really different tastes to you.
* Follow writers, book clubs and book podcasts on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.
* Read book reviews.
* Look at lists of 100 best books, for example, the Guardian 100 Best Novels (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/the-100-best-novels>) and Guardian Best Books of the 21st Century (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/21/best-books-of-the-21st-century>)
* Read a book in translation (https:/www.theguardian.com/books/fiction-in-translation).
* Write or record a review of your ‘out of your comfort zone read’.
* Then take another risk with your reading. Keep being a risk taker! (What risk is there really? You don’t have to finish it if you hate it...)

**CAREER PATHWAYS IN ENGLISH**



**Studying at University**

Undergraduate degrees in English may be entirely literature focused or include combinations with languages, humanities or social science subjects. For example:

* Classics and English BA
* Comparative Literature and Film Studies MA
* Education and English BA
* English and a modern foreign language BA
* English Literature and Philosophy BA
* English Literature and/or Language BA

**What career skills will I gain?**

Career-specific skills:

* In-depth knowledge of English literature, its history and development, and its diverse forms
* Knowledge of other works written in English from around the world, as well as their context and influences
* You may have developed skills as a creative writer or gained other subject-specific skills, depending on your degree combination

Transferable skills:

* Clear and persuasive communication
* Creative imagination
* Critical thinking and analysis
* IT skills
* Organisation
* Problem solving
* Research
* Self-discipline
* Team working
* Time management

Explore degree courses: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings/english>

**Exploring Apprenticeships**

Find out more at:

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/are-they-right-for-you>

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/browse-by-interests>

Here are a few areas you might not have considered.

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