

Year 11 into Year 12 Transition Work: English Literature A Level

What's included in this pack:

- 1) **Topic 1: An introduction to English Literature**
- 2) **Topic 2: What is the relevance of English Literature in the world today?**
- 3) **Topic 3: An introduction to Literary Theory**
- 4) **Topic 4: Frankenstein by Mary Shelley.**
- 5) **Topic 5: An introduction to Poetry.**
- 6) **Topic 6: Creative writing task.**

All tasks are in **green font** so you can see exactly what to do for each section.

Topic 1: Why study English Literature A Level?

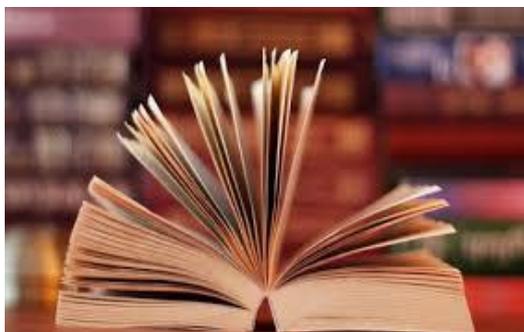
You study **wide-ranging, interesting texts**.

You develop **key transferrable skills**, such as analytical, communication and discursive skills.

You have **extracurricular opportunities** such as visits and competitions.

It is a **highly valued A-Level** by **top universities** –not just if you want to study English. Those who study English at A-Level can study practically **any course at university**.

We're **shaped by language and the society and world we live in**; studying English is about **our past, our present and our future**. Texts can advocate for change and studying English makes us think about different morals and values, our experiences and those of others.



What is involved in the English Literature A Level course?

<u>Paper</u>	<u>Texts</u>	<u>% of A Level</u>	<u>Assessment Objectives</u>
Paper 1 Drama	Othello and A Streetcar Named Desire	30%	AO1, 2, 3 and 5
Paper 2 Prose	Frankenstein and The Handmaid's Tale	20%	AO1, 2, 3 and 4
Paper 3 Poetry	Poems of the Decade (Post 2000 Poetry) and the poetry of John Keats	30%	AO1, 2, 3 and 4
Paper 4 Coursework	The Color Purple and a second text of your choice	20%	AO1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Topic 2: What is the relevance of English Literature in the world today?

Task:

Write a personal response, using examples of texts and examples of events and emotions in the real world that texts can help us understand. Be detailed and original! This should be typed and 1 1/2 - 2 sides of A4.

A few things to think about:

- *What issues in the world today have always existed?*
- *What issues to do with what it means to be human can literature explore?*
- *Arguments for AND against*
- *Examples – what stories, poems or plays have you read that made you think about the world in a different way, or felt particularly relatable to your own life and experiences?*



Topic 3: An Introduction to Literary Theory

Task:

- 1) Read through the following critical theories
- 2) Summarise each theory in 6 bullet points.
 - ...
 - ...
 - ...
 - ...
 - ...
 - ...
- 3) What are the most important points? Now reduce the six bullet points you have by for each theory into 3 key ideas.
 - ...
 - ...
 - ...

Literary Theory: An Introduction

Literary theories act as different lenses that critics use to view and talk about art, literature, and culture. The different lenses also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important.

Psychoanalytic Criticism (1930s-present)

Sigmund Freud

Psychoanalytic criticism builds on Freudian theories of psychology. While we don't have the room here to discuss all of Freud's work, a general overview is necessary to explain psychoanalytic literary criticism.

The Unconscious and the Desires

Freud began his psychoanalytic work in the 1880s while attempting to treat behavioural disorders in his Viennese patients. Freud asserted that people's behavior is affected by their unconscious: "...the notion that human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware..." (Tyson 14-15). Freud also believed that our unconscious was influenced by childhood events. To keep all internal conflict buried in our unconscious, Freud argued that we develop defences: selective perception, selective memory, denial, displacement, projection, regression, fear of intimacy, and fear of death, among others.

Id, Ego, and Superego

Freud maintained that our desires and our unconscious conflicts give rise to three areas of the mind:

- id - "...the location of the drives" or libido
- ego - "...one of the major defenses against the power of the drives..." and home of the defenses listed above
- superego - the area of the unconscious that houses Judgment (of self and others) and "...which begins to form during childhood as a result of the Oedipus complex" (Richter 1015-1016)

Freud and Literature

Some critics believe that we can "...read psychoanalytically...to see which concepts are operating in the text in such a way as to enrich our understanding of the work and, if we plan to write a paper about it, to yield a meaningful, coherent psychoanalytic interpretation" (Tyson 29).

Marxist Criticism (1930s-present)

Whom Does It Benefit?

Based on the theories of Karl Marx, this theory concerns itself with class differences, economic and otherwise, as well as the implications and complications of the capitalist system. Marxism attempts to reveal the ways in which our socioeconomic system is the ultimate source of our experience and all other inequalities. Marxist critics are also interested in how the lower or working classes are oppressed - in everyday life and in literature.

Feminist Criticism (1960s-present)

Feminist criticism is concerned with the ways in which texts reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. This theory looks at how aspects of our culture are inherently patriarchal (male dominated) and aims to expose misogyny in writing about women, which can take explicit and implicit forms. Feminist criticism is also concerned with less obvious forms of marginalization but that still show inequalities have not been resolved.

Common ideas in Feminist Theories

Though a number of different approaches exist in feminist criticism, there exist some areas of commonality:

Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically; patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which women are oppressed.

In every domain where patriarchy reigns, woman is other: she is marginalized, defined only by her difference from male norms and values.

All of Western civilization is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology, for example, in the Biblical portrayal of Eve as the origin of sin and death in the world.

All feminist activity, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality.

Typical questions of feminism:

How is the relationship between men and women portrayed?

What are the power relationships between men and women (or characters assuming male/female roles)?

How are male and female roles defined?

What constitutes masculinity and femininity?

How do characters embody these traits?

Do characters take on traits from opposite genders? How so? How does this change others' reactions to them?

What does the work reveal about the operations (economically, politically, socially, or psychologically) of patriarchy?

What does the work imply about the possibilities of sisterhood as a mode of resisting patriarchy?

What does the work say about women's creativity?

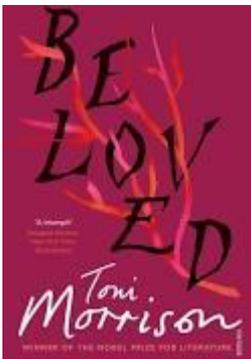
What does the history of the work's reception by the public and by the critics tell us about the operation of patriarchy?

What role does the work play in terms of women's literary history and literary tradition?

Task:

Read the extract below from a novel called *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Apply one critical theory of your choice to answer the following question: "Explore how Morrison presents the characters of Paul D and Sethe, applying the theory of...."

Extract from *Beloved*: The character, Paul D, has arrived at Sethe's house. She is a working-class mother and they haven't seen each other for a long while.



Paul D tied his shoes together, hung them over his shoulder and followed her through the door straight into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood.

"You got company?" he whispered, frowning.

"Off and on," said Sethe.

"Good God." He backed out the door onto the porch. "What kind of evil you got in here?"

"It's not evil, just sad. Come on. Just step through."

He looked at her then, closely. Closer than he had when she first rounded the house on wet and shining legs, holding her shoes and stockings up in one hand, her skirts in the other. Halle's girl--the one with iron eyes and backbone to match. He had never seen her hair in Kentucky. And though her face was eighteen years older than when last he saw her, it was softer now. Because of the hair. A face too still for comfort; irises the same color as her skin, which, in that still face, used to make him think of a mask with mercifully punched-out eyes. Halle's woman. Pregnant every year including the year she sat by the fire telling him she was going to run. Her three children she had already packed into a wagonload of others in a caravan of Negroes crossing the river. They were to be left with Halle's mother near Cincinnati. Even in that tiny shack, leaning so close to the fire you could smell the heat in her dress, her eyes did not pick up a flicker of light. They were like two wells into which he had trouble gazing. Even punched out they needed to be covered, lidded, marked with some sign to warn folks of what that emptiness held. So he looked instead at the fire while she told him, because her husband was not there for the telling. Mr. Garner was dead and his wife had a lump in her neck the size of a sweet potato and unable to speak to anyone. She leaned as close to the fire as her pregnant belly allowed and told him, Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men.

Topic 4: An introduction to Frankenstein by Mary Shelley.

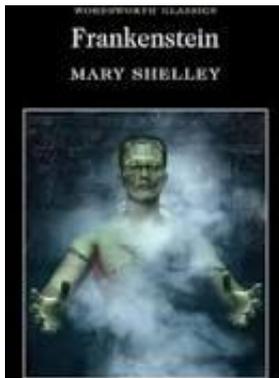
Frankenstein is written in epistolary form (epistolary means writing in Letters). It opens with a series of letters by an explorer, Robert Walton. He comes across a mysterious man called Victor Frankenstein, who tells his terrifying tale...

In Chapter 5, Victor describes how he creates a monster from dead human body parts.

Task: Read the creation scene below then answer the following questions.

Questions:

- 1) How does Victor feel before the monster comes to life? Include a quotation to support your answer.
- 2) How does Victor feel after the creation comes to life?
- 3) What does Victor do next?
- 4) How is nature described? Why? Include a quotation in your answer.
- 5) Write a 3-4 paragraph analytical response to the following question: Explore how Mary Shelley explores a sense of threat in Chapter 5 of Frankenstein. Challenge-what multiple interpretations of "threat" can you include?



Chapter 5

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.

Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams.

I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel.

I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks.

He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

Topic 5: Introduction to Poetry

TASK:

Choose a poem of your choice by one of the following poets: Sinead Morrissey, Patience Agbabi, or Tim Turnbull. (Google their names and see what you can find!). Choose a poem you like best and create an A4 presentation about it. This should include: a summary of what the poem is about; key quotations; any extra research you have done about the poem poet; your reasons for choosing this poem above others.

TASK:

Read through 'To My Nine Year Old Self' by Helen Dunmore. Annotate for methods and write a one-page response on the question:

"Explore how Dunmore presents ideas about identity in her poem 'To My Nine Year Old Self'.

To My Nine-Year-Old Self by Helen Dunmore

You must forgive me. Don't look so surprised,
perplexed, and eager to be gone,
balancing on your hands or on the tightrope.
You would rather run than walk, rather climb than run
rather leap from a height than anything.

I have spoiled this body we once shared.
Look at the scars, and watch the way I move,
careful of a bad back or a bruised foot.

Do you remember how, three minutes after waking
we'd jump straight out of the ground floor window
into the summer morning?

That dream we had, no doubt it's as fresh in your mind
as the white paper to write it on.
We made a start, but something else came up –
a baby vole, or a bag of sherbet lemons –
and besides, that summer of ambition
created an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap
and a den by the cesspit.

I'd like to say that we could be friends
but the truth is we have nothing in common
beyond a few shared years. I won't keep you then.
Time to pick rosehips for tuppence a pound,
time to hide down scared lanes
from men in cars after girl-children,

or to lunge out over the water
on a rope that swings from that tree
long buried in housing –
but no, I shan't cloud your morning. God knows
I have fears enough for us both –
I leave you in an ecstasy of concentration
slowly peeling a ripe scab from your knee
to taste it on your tongue.

Topic 6: Section 5 Optional extra. Creative writing: Foyle Young Poets Competition

This as a chance to engage with your own creative writing. The Foyle Young Poets is open to students from all across the country. Foyle Young Poets: <https://foyleyoungpoets.org/> . The competition is open until July 31st. You can write any type of poem about any theme – be as original as you can, explore the possibilities of language, imagery and structure. Remember to 'show not tell'.