

## **Studying English at Key Stage 5 – Summer Preparation**

**Welcome to Key Stage 5 English! We look forward to welcoming you onto the course. A Levels are a big jump up from GCSEs and so we want you to start in September feeling confident and prepared. The following tasks will help you with this.**

### **Task 1: Why study English?**

Write a one-side response to the question. It is up to you how you answer this – we are interested to hear your ideas! Here are some prompts to think about:

- What is the purpose of studying English?
- How is studying literature relevant to our world today?
- What skills do you think English can help you to develop?
- What text/s have you read that have had an impact on you before? (Try and include at least one that you have read outside of your set school and GCSE texts!)

Be creative! You can be creative with your structure and style and include a range of content, such as favourite quotations, links to other subjects, counter-arguments...

### **Task 2: Close analysis of a poem or prose extract**

Below is one of the poems that you study as part of the Poems of the Decade collection and an extract from *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, which you study as part of the 'Science and Society' prose module.

Choose either text and write a close analysis (about one side). This should include:

- A brief summary of what the text is about
- What the text's deeper themes and emotions might include
- In depth analysis of methods. Think about: narrative voice; repetitions in the language; poetic methods e.g. caesura, enjambment and stanzas; similes and imagery; symbolism.
- Look in particular how both writers use language to reflect layers of meaning, conveying one message on the surface but with deeper themes underneath.

**Extract from The Handmaid's Tale:**

The lawns are tidy, the facades are gracious, in good repair; they're like the beautiful pictures they used to print in the magazines about homes and gardens and interior decoration. There is the same absence of people, the same air of being asleep. The street is almost like a museum, or a street in a model town constructed to show the way people used to live. As in those pictures, those museums, those model towns, there are no children.

This is the heart of Gilead, where the war cannot intrude except on television. Where the edges are we aren't sure, they vary, according to the attacks and counterattacks; but this is the center, where nothing moves. The Republic of Gilead, said Aunt Lydia, knows no bounds.

Gilead is within you.

Doctors lived here once, lawyers, university professors. There are no lawyers anymore, and the university is closed.

Luke and I used to walk together, sometimes, along these streets. We used to talk about buying a house like one of these, an old big house, fixing it up. We would have a garden swing for the Children. We would have children. Although we knew it wasn't too likely we could ever afford it, it was something to talk about, a game for Sundays.

Such freedom now seems almost weightless.

## **Eat Me by Patience Agbabi**

When I hit thirty, he brought me a cake,  
three layers of icing, home-made,  
a candle for each stone in weight.

The icing was white but the letters were pink,  
they said, eat me. And I ate, did  
what I was told. Didn't even taste it.

Then he asked me to get up and walk  
round the bed so he could watch my broad  
belly wobble, hips judder like a juggernaut.

The bigger the better, he'd say, I like  
big girls, soft girls, girls I can burrow inside  
with multiple chins, masses of cellulite.

I was his Jacuzzi. But he was my cook,  
my only pleasure the rush of fast food,  
his pleasure, to watch me swell like forbidden fruit.

His breadfruit. His desert island after shipwreck.  
Or a beached whale on a king-size bed  
craving a wave. I was a tidal wave of flesh

too fat to leave, too fat to buy a pint of full-fat milk,  
too fat to use fat as an emotional shield,  
too fat to be called chubby, cuddly, big-built.

The day I hit thirty-nine, I allowed him to stroke  
my globe of a cheek. His flesh, my flesh flowed.  
He said, Open wide, poured olive oil down my throat.

Soon you'll be forty... he whispered, and how  
could I not roll over on top. I rolled and he drowned  
in my flesh. I drowned his dying sentence out.

I left him there for six hours that felt like a week.  
His mouth slightly open, his eyes bulging with greed.  
There was nothing else left in the house to eat.

### **Task 3: Contemporary Novels Reading List**

Choose one of the books from the list below. You can google the titles and read summaries and short extracts to help you decide. This is only a short list but these texts will all get you thinking about some of the themes and ideas that we explore during the A Level course.

Be prepared to share your thoughts about the book in class! Think about:

- What's it about? What is the structure of the text? Who are the main characters?
- What are the key themes? What might the author's purpose have been in writing the book?
- What did you like best about it? (Be precise: e.g. a particular section/pattern of language/link to the text's context etc)>
- What questions did it leave you wanting to ask?

Of course, aim to read as widely as you can this summer! You can read all the texts on the list and read as many other books of your choice as well. A full A Level English Literature Reading List is also available.

#### **Contemporary Novels Reading List:**

Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Achiche

*The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter

*Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley

*The Road* by Cormac McCarthy

*Atonement* by Ian McEwan

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison

*NW* by Zadie Smith

*The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead