**A Level English Literature – Bridging Work**

This bridging work is designed to support you to make the step up between GCSE and A Level in the study of English Literature. The nature of the subject requires you to do a lot of reading, so it is beneficial to get ahead with the reading of set texts if you can. It is also important to read around the subject, which you can begin by completing the research activities below and looking at the suggestions for further reading.

**Reading**

Specification

Download the specification and familiarize yourself with the different elements of the course:

* Drama
* Prose
* Poetry
* NEA (comparative coursework)

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-2015.html>

Set texts

We will be studying the Supernatural theme for Component 2: Prose and our chosen texts are:

* *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
* *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde

To give you a head start in your studies, read these texts before the course starts.

Suggestions for further and wider reading

* *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
* *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
* *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James
* *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier
* *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu
* *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice
* *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill
* *Shadowplay* by Joseph O’Connor (a novel based on the life of Bram Stoker)

**Research**

Task 1: Gothic Literature

Both *Dracula* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be classified as gothic literature. To help you understand the gothic context of the novel, and what it means to describe a text as ‘gothic’ you should research and make notes on the following areas:

* What are some of the key themes and ideas explored across gothic literature?
* What sort of settings are often used in gothic literature? Can you find any descriptions of places from famous gothic novels?
* What is a ‘gothic villain’? What characteristics do they typically have?
* When did gothic literature first become widely popular? Can you find any reasons or explanations for its rise in popularity?
* Why was there a renewed interest in gothic literature during the Victorian period?

The British Library website will be extremely helpful to you in undertaking your research: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/themes/the-gothic>

Task 2: Poetry

One element of the poetry component is studying a selection of poems from *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002 –2011*.

The following websites provide information and analysis on the poems. Look up ‘The Furthest Distances I’ve Travelled’ and ‘To My Nine-Year-Old Self’ and complete the task below:

<https://interpreture.com/poems-of-the-decade-revision/>

<https://reidl008306.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/poetry-anthology-and-guide-2.pdf>

Task

Read and annotate ‘The Furthest Distances I’ve Travelled’ by Leontia Flynn and ‘To My Nine-Year-Old Self’ by Helen Dunmore. Then answer the following question:

Compare the ways in which the poets explore the process of growing up in ‘The Furthest Distances I’ve Travelled’ and ‘To My Nine-Year-Old Self’

In your answer you should consider:

* The poets’ development of themes
* The poets’ use of language and imagery
* The use of other poetic techniques

“To My Nine-Year-Old Self”

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

Helen Dunmore

“The Furthest Distances I’ve Travelled”

Like many folk, when first I saddled a rucksack,

feeling its weight on my back –

the way my spine

curved under it like a meridian –

I thought: Yes. This is how

to live. On the beaten track, the Sherpa pass, between

Krakow

and Zagreb, or the Siberian white

cells of scattered airports,

it came clear as over a tannoy

that in restlessness, in anonymity:

was some kind of destiny.

So whether it was the scare stories about Larium

– the threats of delirium

and baldness – that lead me, not to a Western Union

wiring money with six words of Lithuanian,

but to this post office with a handful of bills

or a giro; and why, if I’m stuffing smalls

hastily into a holdall, I am less likely

to be catching a greyhound from Madison to

Milwaukee than to be doing some overdue laundry

is really beyond me.

However,

when, during routine evictions, I discover

alien pants, cinema stubs, the throwaway

comment – on a Post–It – or a tiny stowaway

pressed flower amid bottom drawers,

I know these are my souvenirs

and, from these crushed valentines, this unravelled

sports sock, that the furthest distances I’ve travelled

have been those between people. And what survives

of holidaying briefly in their lives.

Leontia Flynn

Additional resources

You might find the following links useful:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/English%20Literature/2015/teaching-and-learning-materials/Part_1_Exploring_poetry_v_final.pdf>

A student book on exploring poetry with many activities to complete

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/English%20Literature/2015/teaching-and-learning-materials/Literary_terminology_guide.pdf>

A guide to literary terminology