

# A level

# English Literature

# Summer Transition Work

Adapted from PiXL



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E. E. Cummings



Thomas Dekker



Charles Dickens



Emily Dickinson



Stephen Duck



Maria Edgeworth



George Eliot



F. Scott Fitzgerald



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# I. Introduction

Welcome to English Literature! You are soon going to be continuing your journey further into the imaginings of some of the most famous, influential and important writers that are and have ever been. Initially, this can seem quite daunting as there is so much, but hopefully this guide will help you with some starting points to ease the transition from GCSEs to A Level.

First of all, you need to find out what your course will involve and what you may need to do in advance of starting. The best and most effective way of doing this is to speak to your school and, ideally, your teachers and follow any guidance that they give you. However, here is some general advice as well.

## What is the role of English Literature?

Literature is significant to the reader, and the writer, in so many different ways, and understanding this before you actually start the course will give you more insight into the subject, as well as what you can gain from studying it.

You'll find the following TED Talk useful in considering the power of the story, and how it is a part of the world that we live in.

[Elif Shafak: The politics of fiction | TED Talk](#)

Then watch Ann Morgan talk about how reading widely opens up your understanding of the world:

[My year reading a book from every country in the world](#)



## Find out the course and details:

There are many different English Literature courses out there. At Coombe we do the EDEXCEL board. It is useful to look at the website for the exam board as they have specifications for the course and exam materials, and they often release support materials for students. Have a quick browse of the information provided to give you a feel for the types of questions and the course content:

[Edexcel AS & A level English Literature 2015](#)

## From GCSE to A Level:

Although every college and/ or school is different, the shift from GCSE to A Level is often based upon the idea of independence. In English Literature the expectations will most likely be that you will take on a greater responsibility for your learning. What this means is that you will be having to come up with your own opinions and ideas about texts, discuss ideas without prompting and complete essays with fewer restrictions on how you approach the question compared with GCSE.

You will be expected to complete work independently and quite often in advance of each lesson. You may also be required to deliver things such as short presentations and participate in seminars (discussion and debate based learning).



## II. General Reading List

One of the great things about English Literature courses is that they often introduce you to a wide array of amazing authors and texts. There is so much literature that it can be bewildering to begin with. Instead of providing a comprehensive reading list, we have listed below some key suggestions for starting points of books that you might want to read, to begin gaining knowledge of wider literature to both help your course and interests. However, there is much more out there. If you want to seek out more, the good news is that it is very easy to do so. Simply do an online search for anything like 'English Literature A Level reading list' and there will be hundreds (if not thousands) of books suggested. For now, here are a few pointers:

- ★ Read the books listed on your course (even the ones you don't have to)
- ★ Read other books by the same authors as the ones that you will be studying
- ★ Read other books within the same genre(s) that you will be studying
- ★ Read [A Very Short Introduction to Literary Theory](#), which helps access the connection between literature, culture, and why literature matters

It is impossible to create a fully comprehensive reading list for A Level Literature but here are a few authors and books that regularly crop up as coursework choices or on recommended reading lists:

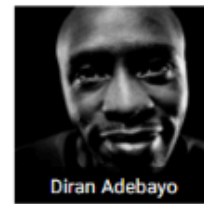
### Prose Fiction:

Author	Book	Author	Book
Achebe, Chinua	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	Hardy, Thomas	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i>
Atwood, Margaret	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Heller, Joseph	<i>Catch 22</i>
Austen, Jane	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Ishiguro, Kazuo	<i>The Remains of the Day</i>
Banks, Iain	<i>The Wasp Factory</i>	Kesey, Ken	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
Barker, Pat	<i>Regeneration</i>	McCarthy, Cormac	<i>The Road</i>
Brontë, Charlotte	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	McEwan, Ian	<i>Atonement</i>
Brontë, Emily	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Mitchell, David	<i>Cloud Atlas</i>
Burgess, Anthony	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>	Morrison, Toni	<i>Beloved</i>
Carter, Angela	<i>The Bloody Chamber</i>	Orwell, George	<i>1984</i>
Conrad, Joseph	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	Plath, Sylvia	<i>The Bell Jar</i>
Dickens, Charles	<i>Great Expectations</i>	Smith, Zadie	<i>White Teeth</i>
Eugenides, Jeffrey	<i>The Virgin Suicides</i>	Stoker, Bram	<i>Dracula</i>
Faulks, Sebastian	<i>Birdsong</i>	Wilde, Oscar	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>
Fitzgerald, F. Scott	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	Woolf, Virginia	<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>

As with the suggestions previously, it is worth looking at other books by the same writers.

## Poetry:

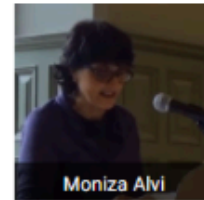
Poet	Poems
Blake, William	<i>Songs of Innocence and Experience</i>
Duffy, Carol Ann	Any
Eliot, T.S.	<i>The Wasteland</i>
Heaney, Seamus	Any
Hughes, Ted	<i>Birthday Letters</i>
Keats, John	<i>The Odes</i>
Larkin, Philip	<i>The Whitsun Weddings</i>
Owen, Wilfred	Any
Plath, Sylvia	Any
Wordsworth, William	Any
Various (contemporary)	<i>Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry</i>



Diran Adebayo



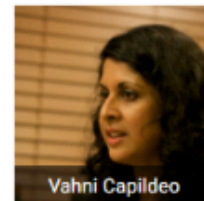
Patience Agbabi



Moniza Alvi



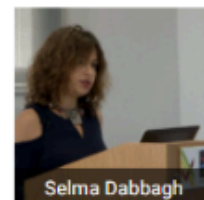
Raymond Antrobus



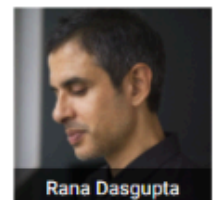
Vahni Capildeo



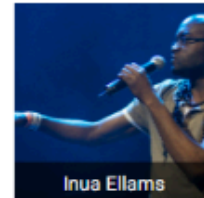
Brian Chikwava



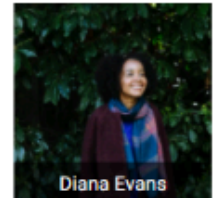
Selma Dabbagh



Rana Dasgupta



Inua Ellams



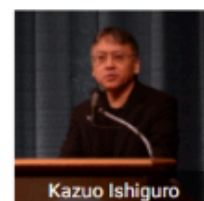
Diana Evans



Aminatta Forna



Xiaolu Guo



Kazuo Ishiguro



Linton Kwesi Johnson

## Drama:

Playwright	Play
Beckett, Samuel	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Miller, Arthur	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Pinter, Harold	<i>The Birthday Party</i>
Shakespeare, William	Any
Stoppard, Tom	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead</i>
Williams, Tennessee	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Wilde, Oscar	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>

# III. Essay Writing

One of the biggest fears that many students have is the first assignment or essay that they get. Whilst this is a daunting experience, be assured that you are on a course which will be guiding you on how to improve your writing. No-one is expecting you to write perfectly from day one. Here are a few pointers to help with this:

- Make sure that you have checked exactly what is required of you for the essay itself – details such as if there is a word-count requirement and specifics such as what areas of the text you are focusing on.
- Speak to your teachers – they are there to help and will be able to guide you.
- Plan and prepare – you must give yourself plenty of time to think and to write. Plan out your time and do not leave it until the last minute.
- Review and edit – once you have finished writing you must always give yourself a good amount of time to check through your response for both aspects such as SPAG checking but also checking that you have covered the question properly.

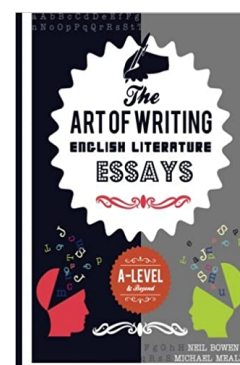
## Understand the Assessment Objectives:

Assessment objectives are the different skills that the examiner is going to judge in your work. It is helpful to know what they are from the start of your course in order to gain marks and write successful responses. The actual assessment objectives are more detailed than below but here they are in brief:

AO1	Quality of response (interpretation), use of terminology and written expression
AO2	Analysis of how meanings are shaped
AO3	Contexts
AO4	Connections
AO5	Different interpretations

## [The Art of Writing English Literature Essays](#)

This is an excellent book (which is part of a series of excellent books) for honing your essay writing skills. It has a superb section on the idea of writing coherently and cohesively (a difficult skill to master) and is ultimately an excellent reference guide for each and every essay you will write.



## IV. Summer Tasks:

Choose a suitably challenging novel, poem (or collection of poetry) or a play (or do all three) to read before your course, and then answer and prepare the following:

1. Take notes of any ideas or techniques that the writer used that interested you.
2. Write a critical review of the text. Here are examples from *The Guardian*: [Guardian Books](#)
3. Create a short presentation (3–5 minutes), that you can deliver to your class and/or teacher, on the text which covers the basic ideas of the text but also considers it critically.

