

AQA A-LEVEL ENGLISH

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

WIDER READING

[A-level English 7707 | Specification | AQA](#)

(Texts are prose fiction, unless indicated otherwise)

“Frankenstein” by Mary Shelley is a Year 12 set text, and “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald is a Year 13 set text.

Carol Ann Duffy is our set poet.

Shakespeare’s Othello is our dramatic text.

1. Read “Frankenstein”, “The Great Gatsby”, Carol Ann Duffy’s “Selected Poems” and Othello

2. Read texts by linked to areas of the course from the below list:

[George Orwell](#)

“Down and Out in Paris and London” (autobiographical, travelogue for Paris anthology)

“Selected Essays” (non-fiction) – specifically: “How the Poor Die”; “Politics and the English Language”; “Benefit of Clergy”; “Decline of the English Murder”

“1984” (dystopian fiction)

Carlos Ruiz Zafron

“The Shadows of the Wind” (Magical Realism)

Angela Carter

“The Bloody Chamber” (Feminist Gothic rewriting)

Ernest Hemingway

“A Movable Feast” (autobiographical travelogue, largely in Paris)

Jean Rhys

“Wide Sargasso Sea” (prequel to “Jane Eyre”, classic example of literary recasting)

Percival Everett

“James” (clever recasting of Huckleberry Finn)

Truman Capote

(non-fiction novel) “In Cold Blood” The first non-fiction/reportage novel.

Oscar Wilde

“The Picture of Dorian Gray” Isolation and the monstrous self

Kazuo Ishiguro

“Never Let Me Go” Modern parallel to Frankenstein

Theodore Dalrymple

(non-fiction, cultural essays) “Our Culture – What’s Left of It” “Not with a Bang but a Whimper”

Bill Bryson

(non-fiction, first-person travelogue) “Neither Here nor There – Travels in Europe”
“Notes from a Small Island” “Shakespeare: The world as a stage”

The best thing that you can do to prepare for English Literature is to read a wide range of good quality books. But beyond reading you can also do these:

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 is an example, a review of *The Handmaid's Tale* in *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/sep/26/the-handmaids-tale-margaret-atwood>

3. Do a piece of creative writing inspired by the text – this should in some way mimic the style of writing of the author – and write a commentary on how you have achieved this.

4. Read a critical view of the text that you have chosen.

5. 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.

USEFUL LINKS FOR FURTHER WIDER READING

- [BBC Programme](#)
- [Poetry Archive](#)
- [British Library Learning Resources](#)
- [Writers Inspire](#)
- [The Guardian – Books Series](#)
- [The Guardian – Mind Your Language](#)
- [Damian Barr's Literary Salon \(Podcast\)](#)
- [BBC – In Our Time](#)
- [Wider Reading on *Othello* \(Amy Smith\)](#)
- [The Nottingham Stylistics Toolkit - Overview](#)

Summer Tasks:

The best thing that you can do to prepare for English A Level is to read a wide range of good quality books. But beyond reading you can also do these:

Choose a suitably challenging novel, poem (or collection of poetry) or a play (or do all three) to read before your course (from the list above), 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 is an example, a review of *The Handmaid's Tale* in *The Guardian*:
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/sep/26/the-handmaids-tale-margaret-atwood>
3. Do a piece of creative writing inspired by the text – this should in some way mimic the style of writing of the author – and write a commentary on how you have achieved this.
4. Read a critical view of the text that you have chosen.
5. 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.