



Transition to A-Level English Language and Literature 2023



This A-Level is an accessible and stimulating course in which you will engage creatively and independently with a variety of spoken, written and multi-modal texts. You'll develop a range of skills. These include the ability to read critically, analyse, evaluate and undertake independent research, which are invaluable for both further study and future employment.

A-Level course outline.

Below is a brief outline of the assessments for the A-Level course. During the first year of the course you'll study a prose text, a collection of poems and a non-fiction anthology.

Subject Content:

- Remembered places
- Imagined worlds
- Poetic voices
- Writing about society
- Critical commentary
- Dramatic encounters
- Making connections

Assessments at the end of the course:

Paper 1: *Telling Stories*

Exam: 3 hours

Weighting: 40% of A-Level

Paper 2: *Exploring Conflict*

Exam: 2 hours 30 minutes

Weighting: 40% of A-Level

Non-Exam Assessment: *Making Connections*

Assessed by teachers and moderated by AQA

Weighting: 20% of A-Level



Assessment objectives and what they mean

AO1: apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

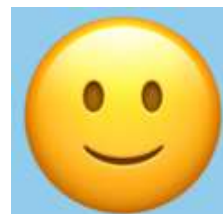
AO2: analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

AO3: demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of contexts in which texts are produced and received.

AO4: explore connections between texts, informed by linguistic and literary concepts and methods.

AO5: demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways.

You will see that the A-Level assessment objectives are quite similar to the GCSE assessment objectives!



You will be studying a topic called *Imagined Worlds*, which is part of Paper One. You will explore and learn how language choices and structures help to shape the representations of different worlds. Fundamentally, you will be developing your understanding of, and exploring the conventions of, the fantasy genre.



The word 'fantasy' derives from the Latin word *phantasia*, meaning 'the imagination'. The fantasy genre is characterised by its strong focus on **anti-realism**: that is, texts which portray places, events and characters that are not usually found in the 'real world'.

The genre of fantasy you will be studying is **dystopian fiction** which deals with a future world in which society is dehumanising, oppressive and destructive.

We will be reading and studying Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which will be examined in Paper One. This novel is Atwood's most popular novel, which is perhaps surprising given its bleak futuristic content! *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian vision set in the near future, after the overthrow of the government of the USA. Women's rights have been eroded with frightening speed as the new Republic of Gilead has reorganised society so that it is now dominated by an oppressive regime that terrorises its population.

Perhaps what is more frightening than the novel's content, is that everything that has happened in the novel has taken place for real somewhere in the world, at some point! Indeed, as Atwood has said herself, there is nothing here which has not been done already by somebody, somewhere.

The story is told by a young Handmaid called Offred. It is her story of resistance and oppression and her fight for survival.

Atwood plunges the reader into an unfamiliar world. The important opening chapter is a flashback to the narrator's time in what we later learn is 'The Red Centre'. Please complete the following tasks:

- Highlight aspects of the opening chapter that seem familiar
- Highlight aspects that seem alien or strange
- Create a list of quotes separated into 'Familiar' and 'Unfamiliar'
- Write a couple of sentences on what you start to deduce about the ways the familiar has changed
- What is the impact of using a first-person narrative?
- Make a list of the questions that Chapter One raises

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

CHAPTER ONE

We slept in what had once been the gymnasium. The floor was of varnished wood, with stripes and circles painted on it, for the games that were formerly played there; the hoops for the basketball nets were still in place, though the nets were gone. A balcony ran around the room, for the spectators, and I thought I could smell, faintly like an afterimage, the pungent scent of sweat, shot through with the sweet taint of chewing gum and perfume from the watching girls, felt-skirted as I knew from pictures, later in mini-skirts, then pants, then in one earring, spiky green-streaked hair. Dances would have been held there; the music lingered, a palimpsest of unheard sound, style upon style, an undercurrent of drums, a forlorn wail, garlands made of tissue-paper flowers, cardboard devils, a revolving ball of mirrors, powdering the dancers with a snow of light.

There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without a shape or name. I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then, in the small of the back, or out back, in the parking lot, or in the television room with the sound turned down and only the pictures flickering over lifting flesh.

We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability? It was in the air; and it was still in the air, an afterthought, as we tried to sleep, in the army cots that had been set up in rows, with spaces between so we could not talk. We had flannelette sheets, like children's, and army-issue blankets, old ones that still said U.S. We folded our clothes neatly and laid them on the stools at the ends of the beds. The lights were turned down but not out. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts.

No guns though, even they could not be trusted with guns. Guns were for the guards, specially picked from the Angels. The guards weren't allowed inside the building except when called, and we weren't allowed out, except for our walks, twice daily, two by two around the football field which was enclosed now by a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The Angels stood outside it with their backs on us. They were objects of fear to us, but of something else as well. If only they would look. If only we could talk to them. Something could be exchanged we thought, some deal made, some trade-off, we still had our bodies. That was our fantasy.

We learned to whisper almost without sound. In the semi-darkness we could stretch out our arms, when the Aunts weren't looking, and touch each other's hands across space. We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, watching each other's mouths. In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed:

Alma. Janine. Dolores. Moira. June.

History that Inspired *The Handmaid's Tale*

As has already been mentioned, *The Handmaid's Tale*'s context is vitally important to your understanding, and making sense, of the novel. To that end, you will need to explore some of these contextual elements. Following are a number of key areas which I would like you to research:

- In Romania, Ceausescu said that women must have at least four children...
- Ronald Reagan's political ideologies – 'Feminists attack Reagan administration plan to curb aid for abortion.'
- The 'Religious Right' in 1980s America in terms of their position on abortion, lesbian and gay rights, religion in government and family values
- The 1980s reversal of women's gains in terms of equality (Phyllis Schlafly, Susan Faludi wrote about this)
- The Aids epidemic in the 1980s
- Totalitarian regime – definition
- Environmental issues and *The Handmaid's Tale*

I suggest you set out your research using bullet-points to ensure information is in your own words!



An incident at the Red Centre where, Janine, another Handmaid, crumbles under intense pressure.



The Wall where the authorities hang the bodies of executed 'criminals' as examples to the rest of the Republic of Gilead.

Please read the following extract at least twice and then work on the tasks that follow it.

An Extract from CHAPTER FOUR of *The Handmaid's Tale*

I open the white picket gate and continue, past the front lawn and towards the front gate. In the driveway, one of the Guardians assigned to our household is washing the car. That must mean the Commander is in the house, in his own quarters, past the dining room and beyond, where he seems to stay most of the time.

The car is a very expensive one, a Whirlwind; better than the Chariot, much better than the chunky, practical Behemoth. It's black, of course, the colour of prestige or a hearse, and long and sleek. The driver is going over it with a chamois, lovingly. This at least hasn't changed, the way men caress good cars. He's wearing the uniform of the Guardians, but his cap is tilted at a jaunty angle and his sleeves are rolled to the elbow, showing his forearms, tanned but with a stipple of dark hairs. He has a cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth, which shows that he too has something he can trade on the black market.

I know this man's name: Nick. I know this because I've heard Rita and Cora talking about him, and once I heard the Commander speaking to him: Nick, I won't be needing the car.

He lives here, in the household, over the garage. Low status: he hasn't been issued a woman, not even one. He doesn't rate: some defect, lack of connections. But he acts as if he doesn't know this, or care. He's too casual, he's not servile enough. It may be stupidity, but I don't think so. Smells fishy, they used to say; or, I smell a rat. Misfit as odour. Despite myself, I think of how he might smell. Not fish or decaying rat: tanned skin, moist in the sun, filmed with smoke. I sigh, inhaling.

He looks at me, and sees me looking. He has a French face, lean, whimsical, all planes and angles, with creases around the mouth where he smiles. He takes a final puff of the cigarette, lets it drop to the driveway, and steps on it. He begins to whistle. Then he winks.

I drop my head and turn so that the white wings hide my face, and keep walking. He's just taken a risk, but for what? What if I were to report him?

Perhaps he was merely being friendly. Perhaps he saw the look on my face and mistook it for something else. Really what I wanted was the cigarette.

Perhaps it was a test, to see what I would do.

Perhaps he is an Eye.

- Highlight anything that seems unfamiliar. E.G. 'an Eye'
- Before the reader is told his name, how does Offred (the narrator) refer to him?
- What do we discover about Nick?
- How are we given this information?
- What is the effect of the narrative viewpoint?
- What do the verbs 'assigned' and 'issued' suggest?
- Write at least three paragraphs that answer: '**How is Nick Presented in this Extract?**' This is similar to your GCSE Literature tasks (Jekyll & Hyde and Macbeth) where you are provided with an extract which you then analyse. Your opening paragraph should be a very brief overview of Nick (from this extract).

WHAT (point)

WHERE (quote)

HOW (break down the quote and explore key words)

Another topic that you will be studying is *Remembered Places* and is also examined in Paper One. The AQA Anthology: Paris is a weighty tome! It includes a range of text types with a focus on non-fiction which will include spoken, written and multimodal texts.

The Paris anthology is designed so you can explore how representation, viewpoint and genre can be used by different producers (note that this not simply 'writers') of a text. When studying this course, you need to consider:

- How writers and speakers present places, people and events
- How some texts can be used as a metaphorical journey for writers and speakers
- How context, including time period, social, cultural, class and gender, can influence the content
- How media texts can be limiting
- How the genre conventions can be identified in a range of texts.

'Representation' is defined here as the way in which events, people and places are portrayed through language and other ways, such as images and sound.

Why Paris?

Paris is an important European capital city for all sorts of reasons but mostly because of its history, reputation and its cultural and social influences (think food, fashion and art!).

What do you already know about Paris?

Create a mind-map that gathers everything you know together. Consider, for instance, landmarks, famous people, places, activities, film, food etc.

Fundamentally, you are doing the same as you do with *The Handmaid's Tale* as you are working out how language conveys meaning. The real difference is that, where *The Handmaid's Tale* is fiction, the Paris texts are non-fiction!



Bill Bryson is an American author whose writing is characterised by a satirical humour. This extract is taken from his book *Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe* which is a memoir of his time travelling through Europe twenty years before.

Please read the extract below and then complete the tasks that follow it.

‘Eventually I gave up trying to cross the streets in any kind of methodical way and instead just followed whatever route looked least threatening. So it was with some difficulty and not a little surprise that I managed to pick my way by early afternoon to the Louvre, where I found a long immobile queue curled around the entrance courtyard like an abandoned garden hose. I hovered, undecided whether to join the queue, come back later in the faint hope that it would have shrunk, or act like a Frenchman and jump it. The French were remarkably shameless about this. Every few minutes one would approach the front of the queue, affect to look at his wristwatch and then duck under the barrier and disappear through the door with the people at the front. No one protested, which surprised me. In New York, from where many of these people came, judging by their accents and the bullet holes in their trench coats, the queue jumpers would have been seized by the crowd and had their limbs torn from their sockets. I actually saw this happen to a man once at Shea Stadium. It was ugly, but you could not help but cheer. Even in London the miscreants would have received a vicious rebuke - ‘I say, kindly take your place at the back of the queue, my good fellow’ - but here there was not a peep of protest. I could not bring myself to jump the queue, but equally I could not stand among so much motionless humanity while others were flouting the rule of order and getting away with it. So I passed on, and was rather relieved. The last time I went to the Louvre, in 1973 with Katz, it was swarming with visitors and impossible to see anything. The *Mona Lisa* was like a postage stamp viewed through a crowd of heads from another building and clearly things had not improved since then. Besides, there was only one painting I especially wanted to see and that was a remarkable eighteenth-century work, evidently unnoticed by any visitor but me for 200 years among the Louvre’s endless corridors. I almost walked past it myself but something about it nicked the edge of my gaze and made me turn. It was a painting of two aristocratic ladies, young and not terribly attractive, standing side by side and wearing nothing at all but their jewels and sly smiles.’

- As mentioned, the genre of this extract is a memoir. What is its purpose?
- What do you think Bill Bryson feels about Paris from reading this extract?
- How did you work this out - quotes and language features
- Now bring your answer above together to answer the following:

How does Bryson present his experience of visiting the Louvre?

Basically, you need to consider WHAT his experiences of the Louvre are and HOW he shows this. Just like your *previous* analysis, you need to provide a brief overview first.

WHAT (point)

WHERE (quote)

HOW (break down the quote and explore key words)

The final topic of Paper One is *Poetic Voices*. This is a collection of 14 poems from Carol Ann Duffy's 1993 collection, *Mean Time*. In this unit, you will:

- Develop your understanding of the nature and function of poetic voice
- Develop your understanding of how poetic voice can be seen as a representation and projection of identity
- Develop your understanding of how poets use language to present time, place, people and events

So, what is poetic voice?

Your own voice is unique to you – a vocal 'fingerprint' that forms a large part of your identity. In the same way a poet's sense of identity is projected through language choices so as to give the impression of a distinct *persona* with a personal history and a set of beliefs and values.

Although you will not need to write about Carol Ann Duffy's life per se, it is, however, crucial that you have some contextual knowledge as this will support and underpin your understanding of the poems. To that end, please complete some research on the following. As before, do use bullet points to ensure you use your own words.

- Consider brief background of Carol Ann Duffy
- Who/what influences her writing?
- Does Duffy like to convey 'messages' in her poems?
- Consider the linguistic conventions of Duffy's poetry compared to, say, poetry in the 1800s
- How far does Duffy adhere to these?

An example of poetic voice - Please reading the following short poem and then my notes.

'First day at School'

And the railings.
All around, the railings.
Are they to keep out wolves and monsters?
Things that carry off and eat children?
Things you don't take sweets from?
Perhaps they're to stop us getting out
Running away from the lessins. Lessin.
What does a lessin look like?
Sounds small and slimy.
They keep them in the classrooms.
Whole rooms made out of glass. Imagine.

We can work out that the voice is that of a child who seems to find his new world perplexing and confusing. He is insecure, anxious and full of misconceptions.

How did we decide this? Well, the lexis is simple – childlike. There are misspellings that link to his misinterpretations of this new experience and the imaginative language demonstrates his innocence and confusion.

By Roger McGough

Valentine by Carol Ann Duffy

Not a red rose or a satin heart

I give you an onion.

It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.

It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.

It will blind you with tears
like a lover.

It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.

Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.

Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-
ring,
if you like.

Lethal.

Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

TASKS

1. Before you read the poem, please create a mind map on what you immediately think about when you see the word 'valentine'.
2. Now, create a mind map on what you think about when you see an onion!
3. Make a list of any crossovers.
4. Please read the poem.

This is a love poem in which the poet wants to dispel all the clichés surrounding love and romance. Valentine's Day is a celebration of love that many argue has become commercialised and where the same gifts are exchanged by everyone. The poet is suggesting that the typical love tokens which are given by lovers on this day present an image of love that is untruthful and unrealistic.

5. What is the effect of the metaphor and simile in stanza two?
6. Find images that portray the pain of love. Analyse them, using your knowledge of terminology from GCSE.
7. What does the description of the onion's 'fierce kiss' imply about the kind of love that the speaker is offering?
8. What do the adjectives 'possessive' and 'faithful' convey about the speaker's feelings?
9. What is the effect of the imperative 'Take it.'?
10. Analyse the metaphor 'Its platinum rings shrink to a wedding ring.'
11. How is the destructive and painful side of love portrayed in the final stanza?
12. Overall, how would you describe the poetic voice? Give your reasons.

SUMMER READING

Author (Prose)	Title
Chinua Achebe	Things fall Apart
Monica Ali	Brick Lane
Margaret Atwood	The Blind Assassin
Jane Austen	Pride and Prejudice, Emma
Charlotte Bronte	Jane Eyre
Emily Bronte	Wuthering Heights
Angela Carter	The Bloody Chamber
Charles Dickens	Great Expectations, Hard Times
Daphne Du Maurier	Rebecca
George Eliot	Middlemarch, The Mill on the Floss
Sebastian Faulks	Birdsong, Charlotte Gray
F. Scott Fitzgerald	The Great Gatsby
Elizabeth Gaskell	North and South, Wives and Daughters
Gabriel Garcia Marquez	Love in the Time of Cholera
Graham Greene	Brighton Rock
Thomas Hardy	Far from the Madding Crowd, Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Khaled Hosseini	A Thousand Splendid Suns
Harper Lee	To Kill a Mocking Bird
Andrea Levy	Small Island
Ian McEwan	Atonement, Enduring Love
Jean Rhys	Wide Sargasso Sea
Bram Stoker	Dracula
Jeanette Winterson	Oranges are not the Only Fruit

Please feel free to choose other books by these writers! These are just examples.

Please select a book from the list above. I would like you to read it over the summer and prepare a [detailed presentation](#) for when we return in September. A PowerPoint is preferable but you may simply want to stand up and speak about your chosen book. I would like you to comment on:

- What your book is about (briefly!)
- The setting(s)
- Whether you needed to complete any contextual research to aid your understanding
- Your favourite character and why
- The main themes/ideas that run through your book
- Anything else you feel is important.

HAPPY READING ☺