

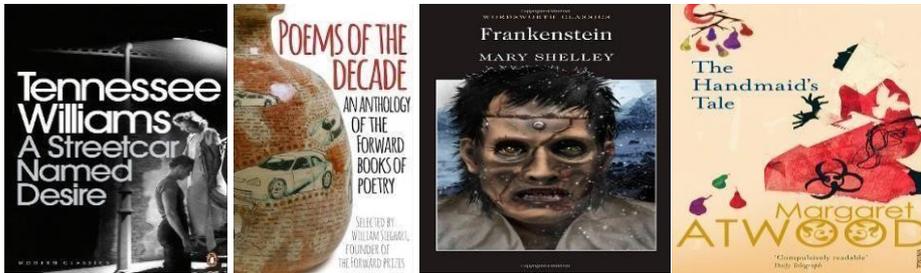
A level English Literature Summer Independent Learning

Welcome to A Level English Literature. Please complete the following tasks ready for your first day at New College:

Part One: Compulsory Content

ONE You need to purchase the following texts for the first term:

- A Streetcar named Desire (ISBN: 978-0-141-19027-3)
- Poems of the Decade (ISBN: 978-0-571-32540-5)
- The Handmaid's Tale (ISBN: 978-0-099-74091-9)
- Frankenstein (ISBN: 13 9781853260230 or 978-1-85326-023-0)



Note: occasionally editions of texts are updated and ISBN numbers change, so it may be that over time there is variation in the ISBN numbers above.

TWO Read *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley. As you read, you should:

- summarise each chapter in brief, bullet-point form
- select two quotations from each chapter and describe in detail the effect of Shelley's use of language for each quotation. You might want to consider tone, lexis, connotations, symbolism, imagery and sound, depending on the quotation selected.

For your 'exploration of effects', you might want to consider:

- the impression your chosen quotation gives of emerging or developing themes, and how it does this
- the impression your chosen quotation gives of character, and how this may relate to developing or emerging themes, and how it does this
- the impression your chosen quotation gives of setting, and how this may relate to developing or emerging themes, and how it does this
- the impression your chosen quotation gives of relationships, and how this may relate to developing or emerging themes, and how it does this

Of course, many quotations may show a combination of these.

The best way of recording this would be to create and complete your own version of the '*Frankenstein* initial reading notes' table (see below)

Frankenstein Initial Reading Notes Table

Section	Bullet point summary	2 pieces of textual evidence and exploration of effects
Robert Walton's Letters		
Chapter 1		
Chapter 2		
Chapter 3		
Chapter 4		
Chapter 5		
Chapter 6		
Chapter 7		
Chapter 8		
Chapter 9		
Chapter 10		
Chapter 11		
Chapter 12		
Chapter 13		
Chapter 14		
Chapter 15		
Chapter 16		
Chapter 17		
Chapter 18		
Chapter 19		
Chapter 20		
Chapter 21		
Chapter 22		
Chapter 23		
Chapter 24		

THREE Read *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood. As you read, you should:

- summarise each chapter in brief, bullet-point form
- select two quotations from each chapter and describe in detail the effect of Atwood's use of language for each quotation. You might want to consider tone, lexis, connotations, symbolism, imagery and sound, depending on the quotation selected.

For your 'explanation of effects' you might want to consider the same four bullet points given for *Frankenstein* (see page 1, above). Again, as with *Frankenstein*, many quotations may show a combination of those four bullet points.

The best way of recording this would be to create and complete your own version of the '*The Handmaid's Tale* initial reading notes' table (see below).

***The Handmaid's Tale* Initial Reading Notes**

Section	Bullet point summary	2 pieces of textual evidence and exploration of effects
Chapter 1		
Chapter 2		
Chapter 3		
Chapter 4		
Chapter 5		
Chapter 6		
Chapter 7		
Chapter 8		
Chapter 9		
Chapter 10		
Chapter 11		
Chapter 12		
Chapter 13		
Chapter 14		
Chapter 15		
Chapter 16		
Chapter 17		
Chapter 18		
Chapter 19		
Chapter 20		
Chapter 21		
Chapter 22		
Chapter 23		
Chapter 24		

Chapter 25		
Chapter 26		
Chapter 27		
Chapter 28		
Chapter 29		
Chapter 30		
Chapter 31		
Chapter 32		
Chapter 33		
Chapter 34		
Chapter 35		
Chapter 36		
Chapter 37		
Chapter 38		
Chapter 39		
Chapter 40		
Chapter 41		
Chapter 42		
Chapter 43		
Chapter 44		
Chapter 45		
Chapter 46		
Historical Notes		

FOUR Read *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams. You might also watch a production on YouTube if you would like to see it in performance, but this should be done in addition to, not instead of, the reading task. Refer to the ‘A Streetcar Named Desire Initial Reading Notes’, below. You should:

- summarise each scene in brief, bullet-point form
- select two pieces of textual evidence from each scene and describe in detail the effect created by Williams with the use of each piece of evidence. Your evidence can be dialogue or stage directions such as use of sound, staging, props, costume or proxemics. You might want to consider tone, lexis, connotations, symbolism and imagery, depending on the quotation selected.

For your ‘explanation of effects’ you might want to consider the same four bullet points given for *Frankenstein* (see page 1, above). Again, as with *Frankenstein*, many quotations may show a combination of those four bullet points.

The best way of recording this would be to create and complete your own version of the ‘A Streetcar Named Desire initial reading notes’ table (see below).

A Streetcar Named Desire Initial Reading Notes

Scene	Bullet point summary	2 pieces of textual evidence and exploration of effects
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

Part Two: Strongly Recommended Additional Content

ONE Produce an essay of at least 600 words in answer to **one** of the following questions:
 Explore Williams’ presentation of Blanche in the first three scenes of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
 Explore Williams’ presentation of Stanley in the first three scenes of *A Streetcar Named Desire* .

Here are some ideas you might consider:

- Our initial introduction to the character
 - How they are presented in terms of clothing, colour, movement, and any props they interact with
 - Use of sound and music
 - What they say, and stage directions which tell us how they say it
 - How the character interacts with other characters, and whether this differs when they are with different characters, and whether it differs from how they are if alone
 - Any changes you see taking place in the characters over the course of the first three scenes ·
- Whether you feel the characters might represent something beyond themselves, e.g. a particular representation of, for example, class, gender or geographical area.

TWO Read the poem below and annotate, identifying any technical decisions the poet has made in terms of language, structure and form, and how these decisions affect the possible meaning of the poem:

Ash

I had a heart like an upturned ashtray.

I spoke smoke. People held their breath.
When I found you, ash was all I had to
pile at your feet.

I did not know what you would do
with my dire, dirtying heart crumbled
there, burning.

Would you brush it off, blow it out,
heap it, beating, in your palm offend
the wind with it?

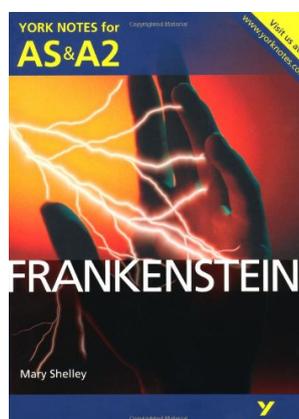
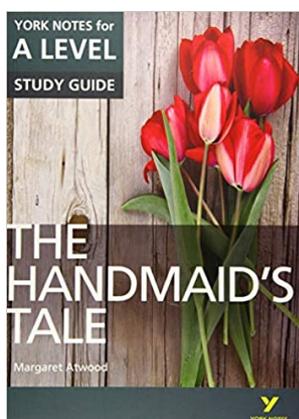
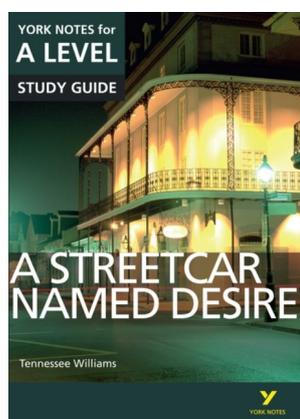
No, you found soil, seeded it. You
poured my heart in, stirred what I
had wasted. And we waited.

Now here's a sapling. Soon, an ash tree.

Further Reading and Exploration

The most valuable thing you can do as a student of literature is to read widely. Literature students at New College tend always to have 'a book on the go' (or three or four...). Ideally there should be a nice balance between enjoying your old favourites, following your interests, and challenging yourself by reading more widely. If most of your reading is novels, it would be good to explore poetry and drama. There is a whole world of literature out there, and you should jump right in! Your teacher will be happy to give you further advice once you start at New College, but the key thing is to keep reading.

In addition to this, the following resources may be of use to you as you begin to explore *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Frankenstein*. Used copies of these can be picked up relatively cheaply online. Slightly different editions will also be perfectly fine and usable, as long as they are specified for A Level (or occasionally, with older editions 'AS & A2'), rather than GCSE:



A Streetcar Named Desire study guide:
ISBN 9781447982265

The Handmaid's Tale study guide:
ISBN 978-1292138183

Frankenstein study guide:
ISBN 9781447913214

In the copy of *Poems of the Decade*, it is likely that in your first few weeks you will look at the following poems, so you may wish to have a read and write down some initial thoughts (if you wish you can write directly onto your book – you don't need to keep it unannotated):

- 'Eat Me' - Patience Agbabi (p3)
- 'The Deliverer' - Tishani Doshi (p43)
- 'Giuseppe' - Roderick Ford (p66)
- 'The Gun' - Vicki Feaver (p62)
- 'Chainsaw Versus the Pampas Grass' - Simon Armitage (p6)

At New College we encourage students to explore online beyond the classroom and constructing their own journey around the wealth of additional resources which can be found online. Once you start at New College you will have access to some fantastic online resources to which we have subscribed. There is plenty out there in the public domain though, so do explore the texts above and see what you can find. Below, for example, is a fascinating article by Margaret Atwood on *The Handmaid's Tale*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/books/review/margaret-atwood-handmaids-tale-age-of-trump.html>

In addition, we would encourage you to look at film/theatre versions or clips of film/theatre versions of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a number of which can be found on youtube, and the National Theatre has at different times given free access to their production starring Gillian Anderson. Consider how these different versions interpret the play, and the extent to which this aligns with the impressions you gain from your reading of the text on the page.