

A Level Literature

Course Guide.



“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies . . . The man who never reads lives only one.” - George R.R. Martin

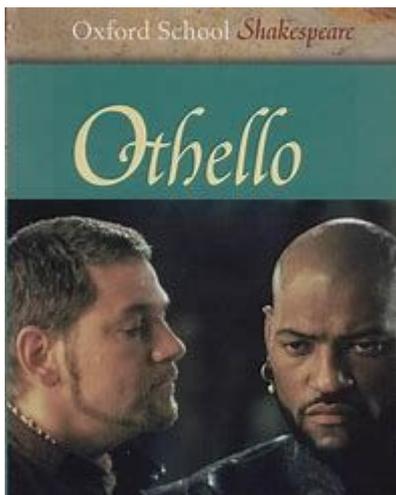
Year 12:

Love through the ages.

The aim of this topic area is to encourage students to explore aspects of a central literary theme as seen over time, using set texts and unseen material. Students should be prepared for Love through the ages by reading widely in the topic area, reading texts from a range of authors and times.

The set texts in year 12 are:

Othello by Willam Shakespeare.



William Shakespeare's *Othello* takes place in 16th-century Venice and Cyprus. Othello is a noble black warrior in the Venetian army that secretly married a beautiful white woman called Desdemona, the daughter of a prominent senator named Brabantio. When Brabantio eventually finds out, he is completely furious and he decides to disown Desdemona.

Iago has a secret jealousy and resentment towards Othello and also suspects that Othello has been cheating with his wife. Waiting for revenge, Iago plans a devious comeback to plant suspicions in Othello's mind that Desdemona has been having an affair with Cassio. He decided to start a street fight which Cassio is blamed for, and is

then dismissed from his post by Othello. Desdemona takes up Cassio's case with her husband, which only increases his suspicions that the pair are lovers.

A tale of forbidden love, jealousy and revenge!

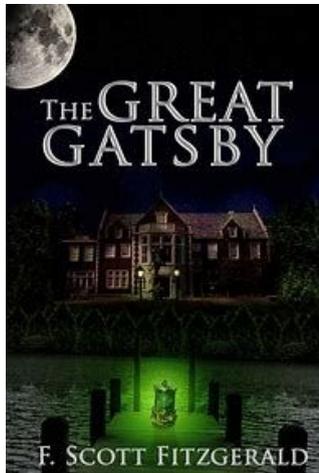
Rebecca by Daphne DuMaurier.



Working as a lady's companion, the heroine of Rebecca learns her place. Her future looks bleak until, on a trip to the South of France, she meets Max de Winter, a handsome widower whose sudden proposal of marriage takes her by surprise. She accepts, but whisked from glamorous Monte Carlo to the ominous and brooding Manderley, the new Mrs de Winter finds Max a changed man. And the memory of his dead wife Rebecca is forever kept alive by the forbidding housekeeper, Mrs Danvers...

This Gothic novel has twists and turns and even a mad woman in the attic!

The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald.



The parties at Gatsby's Long Island mansion were legendarily glamorous affairs. Yet amid the long throng of guests, starlets and champagne waiters, their host would appear oddly aloof. For there was only one person Jay Gatsby sought to impress. She was Daisy Buchanan: married, elegant, seducing men with her silken voice "a voice full of money". As Gatsby pursues his many shady deals, we are introduced to the hedonism and excess of the Jazz Age.

A tale of excess which probes the empty heart of the American Dream.

Anthology: Love poetry through the ages Pre-1900

A selection of poems by poets such as:

Shakespeare
Sir Thomas Wyatt
John Donne
Andrew Marvell
Richard Lovelace
William Blake
Robert Burns
Lord Byron
Thomas Hardy

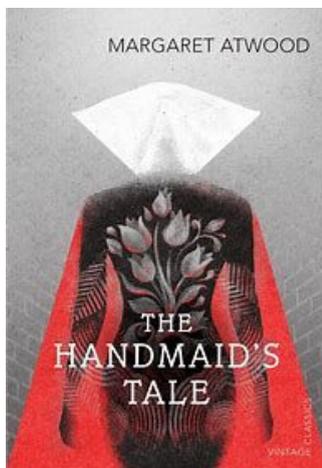
Poems from different eras that can be challenging but so interesting to study and discuss.

Year 13

In year 13, as well as building on year 12 skills, we look at the historicist approach to the study of literature which rests upon reading texts within a shared context. Working from the belief that no text exists in isolation but is the product of the time in which it was produced, year 13 encourages students to explore the relationships that exist between texts and the contexts within which they are written, received and understood. Studying texts within a shared context enables students to investigate and connect them, drawing out patterns of similarity and difference using a variety of reading strategies and perspectives.

Year 13 set texts are:

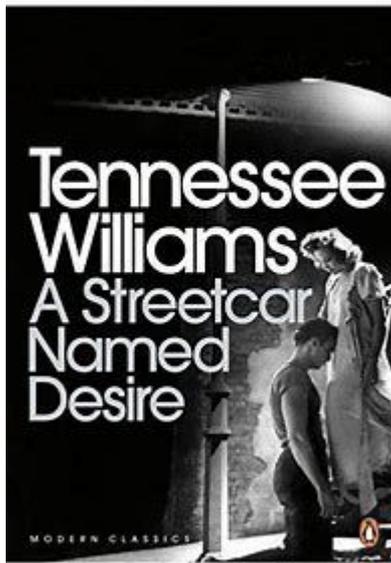
The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood.



Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian and theocratic state that has replaced the United States of America. Because of dangerously low reproduction rates, Handmaids are assigned to bear children for elite couples that have trouble conceiving. Offred serves the Commander and his wife, Serena Joy, a former gospel singer and advocate for “traditional values.” Offred is not the narrator’s real name—Handmaid names consist of the word “of” followed by the name of the Handmaid’s Commander. Every month, when Offred is at the right point in her menstrual cycle, she must have impersonal, wordless sex with the Commander.

A shocking portrayal of a Dystopian Future.

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams.

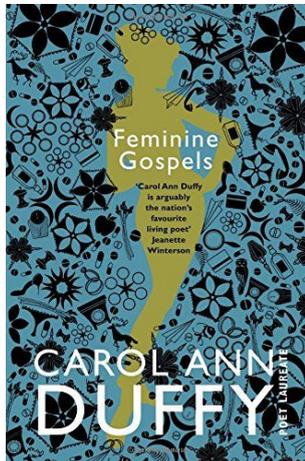


The play takes place right after World War II, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Kowalski apartment is in a poor but charming neighborhood in the French Quarter. Stella, twenty-five years old and from an old Southern family, lives with her blue collar husband Stanley Kowalski (the son of Polish immigrants) It is summertime, and the heat is oppressive. Blanche Dubois, Stella's older sister, arrives unexpectedly, carrying all that she owns. Blanche and Stella have a warm reunion, but Blanche has some bad news: Belle Reve, the family mansion, has been lost. Blanche stayed behind to care for their dying family while Stella left to make a new life for herself, and Blanche is clearly resentful by her sister's abandonment of the family. When Blanche meets her sister's husband, Stanley, for the first time, she immediately feels uncomfortable.

A fascinating study into the clash of two very different cultures.

Feminine Gospels by Carol Ann Duffy.



In this collection of poems, Carol Ann Duffy draws on the historical, the archetypal, the biblical and the fantastical to create various visions - and revisions - of female identity. Simultaneously stripping women bare and revealing them in all their guises and disguises, these poems tell tall stories as though they were true confessions, and spin modern myths from real women seen in every aspect - as bodies and corpses, writers and workers, shoppers and slimmers, fairytale royals or girls-next-door.

Some excellent poems to get your teeth into!

How the course leads to assessment.

There are two papers that make up 80% of your final grade.

Paper one - a 3 hour exam:

Section A - Othello. An extract based question (25 marks)

Section B - Unseen poetry question (25 marks)

Section C - Comparing texts: you will need to link two poems from the year 12 anthology to either Rebecca or The Great Gatsby. (25 marks)

Section C is an open book exam so you will have clean copies of the anthology, Rebecca and The Great Gatsby.

Paper two - a 2.5 hours exam.

You will have a choice of question routes:

Section A - one essay question on the text of your choice (Handmaid's Tale, Streetcar or Feminine Gospels) 25 marks

Section B - one unseen prose question (25 marks)

Section C - one essay question comparing your two remaining texts (Handmaid's Tale, Streetcar or Feminine Gospels) 25 marks

The final 20% of your final grade is made up of your **NEA**, a comparative critical study of two texts of your choice (there are some restrictions here)

You will be able to decide on an area you would like to explore and create your own thesis statement to form the basis of your essay. You will have guidance with this and you will be able to submit drafts of your NEA for your teacher to comment on.

Who should study this course?

If you have a love of reading and enjoy discussing "big ideas" then this is definitely the course for you.