

Welcome to A-level Literature and Language!

The tasks we are asking you to complete are linked to key components of the A-level Literature and Language specification.

Before you arrive in the summer we would love you to...

Let a poem brew over time

Choose a poem. National Poetry Library <https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/onlinepoetry/poems>

Set a timer for 10 seconds.

Do a 'snapshot' look at the poem for 10 seconds – don't try to read it – and jot down anything you notice about it.

Do the same again but this time for 30 seconds.

Now put the poem to one side.

On three different days over the next week or so, spend about 10 minutes reading the poem and writing about it in any way you want. You might write about what you like or what you are puzzled by or you might just ask questions. It's up to you whether you read over what you wrote on the previous occasion – there are advantages to both ways. Over the course of the next few weeks you could try the activity both ways.

On the last day, read the poem again, read over all your writing, then make a few notes or record a voice message exploring how your response to the poem changed and developed

We recommend you spend 1 hour on this task

The Art of a review

Read three or four online reviews for a novel you enjoyed.

Places to find reviews by writers, critics etc: Guardian, Independent, New York Times, Slate or by readers: Amazon, GoodReads, LibraryThing, Book Riot.

Begin by thinking about your personal response to these – is there one you feel more in sympathy with, that captures what you thought and felt? Do you like the style/approach of one more than another?

Then take a step back and look at each a bit more clinically. What do each of the reviewers focus on (the story, the characters, underlying themes, their personal response)? What approach do they take to writing the review?

Drawing on what you have learned about the art of the review and the novel itself, either write your own or write a response to one of them. If you have time, you might like to read this article on writing a great book review: <https://www.stylist.co.uk/life/the-art-of-the-bookreview/46762>

Try exploratory writing

Choose a short text you have not studied before. This could be the opening of a novel, a poem, a scene from a play – it doesn't matter what.

(Some suggestions for where you can find extracts from different types of texts are suggested below.)

Read the text, without making notes.

Now write about it. Just write, in any way you want, almost as though you are having a conversation with yourself. Let your ideas develop and change, contradict yourself, ask questions – it's up to you. The only rule is that you should write in full sentences, not notes or bullet points.

Short stories

A Personal Anthology <https://apersonalanthology.com/> Granta <https://granta.com/discoveries24/>

New Yorker (limited number of articles/stories per month before subscribing)

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/fiction> Electric Literature <https://electricliterature.com/>

Selected Shorts: Let Us Tell You Story <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/selectedshorts/id253191824>

First chapters

New York Times – First Chapters Archive

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/first-fiction.html>

We recommend you spend 1 hour on this