



Saint Benedict
Catholic Voluntary Academy

2026

**BE
PREPARED**

**English
Combined**



St Ralph
Sherwin
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

Be prepared
'A' Level English
Language and Literature

Contents

- Course content
- Terminology
- Vocabulary
- Essential Reading
- Wider Reading & Resources
- Academic writing
- Key Skills
- Example 'A' level question
- Tasks
- Excerpt from a model response

Course content

There are 3 components to this qualification:

1. **Voices in Speech and Writing.** You will explore an anthology comprising non literary and digital texts from the 20th and 21st century. The second aspect is the study of a drama text, 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. For both, you will consider linguistic and literary features and contextual factors. 2 hour 30 minute open book exam
2. **Varieties in Language and Literature** involves the development of analytical skills addressing an unseen Non fiction extract around the theme of 'Society and the Individual'. You will also study two texts reflecting and exploring this theme: 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and 'A Raisin in the Sun' by Lorraine Hansberry. You will critically evaluate linguistic and literary features in the texts individually and then consider connections across both texts. 2 hour 30 minute open book exam.
3. **Non examination assessment** This unit allows you the opportunity to apply your knowledge to your own creative pieces. You have free choice of a topic and will choose 2 texts that reflect the topic. You will produce one piece of fiction writing and one piece of creative non-fiction writing. You will also submit an analytical commentary reflecting on your chosen texts and the writing you produce.

There is an expectation that as a learner you will develop an ability to apply and integrate literary and linguistics approaches within your responses, using the correct terminology. You are also expected to express yourself in a coherent and sophisticated manner, using ambitious vocabulary.

Use the following three pages to familiarise yourself with techniques and suggested vocabulary connected to 'A Streetcar named Desire' by Tennessee Williams.

Terminology

TECHNIQUE	DEFINITION
Anagnorises	The point in a text when a character realises the true identity of another character or the true nature of their own circumstances
Allusion	A reference to another literary text, event or person
Ambiguous	More than one interpretation
Antagonist	The main character who opposes the protagonist in a narrative or play
Bestial imagery	Like a beast or animal
Declarative sentence	Used for conveying information, making a statement, expressing an opinion.
Denouement	The final part of a play when the strands of a plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved
Didactic	Intended to teach something, particularly in having moral instruction as a motive
Exclamatory sentence	Used to express strong emotions or feelings
Expressionism	Characters are mostly nameless and impersonal; they represent some general class or attitude; their characteristics are emphasized by costumes, masks or make-up
Foil	A device that uses a character to contrast or highlight the traits of another character

Terminology

TECHNIQUE	DEFINITION
Grice's Maxims	The cooperative principles of conversation that if broken give rise to implications. Maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner.
Hamartia	A fatal moral flaw in a protagonist of a tragedy
Hubris	Excessive pride or arrogance in a character that oftens leads to their downfall
Interrogative sentence	Used to ask a question
Intertextuality	The relationship between texts, especially literary ones. Where a writer is inspired by or refers to another text
Melodrama	A sensational dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions
Motif	An object or idea that is repeated throughout a text to help to explain a theme
Pathetic fallacy	Where the weather or nature is directly connected to the feelings of characters or atmosphere
Peripeteia	A sudden reversal in fortune or change in circumstances for a character
Protagonist	The principal character in a work of fiction
Realism	A literary genre that attempts to represent subject-matter truthfully avoiding speculative fiction and supernatural elements.
Tableau vivant	A silent and motionless group of people arranged to represent a scene or incident
Tragedy	A play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character.
Trope	A common and accepted convention of a genre. It could be a plot device, character type, an idiom among others.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
Appeasing	Someone who tries to pacify others
Conceited	Excessively proud of oneself; vain
Contrapuntal	Two or more pieces of music playing at the same time, usually contrasting
Coquettish	Behaving in such a way as to suggest a playful sexual attraction; flirtatious
Delusional	Holding false beliefs or judgements despite evidence to the contrary
Egalitarian	Relating to or believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities
Exploitative	Making use of a situation or treating others unfairly in order to gain an advantage or benefit.
Frenetic	Fast and energetic in a rather wild and uncontrolled way
loquacious	Tending to talk a great deal
Melancholy	Someone who is prone to moping and being depressed.
Moribund	A state of inactivity, declining, weak
Predacious	Predatory
Promiscuous	Having lots of short-lived sexual relationships
Quixotic	Extremely idealistic: unrealistic and impractical
Stalwart	Loyal and reliable
Tempestuous	Someone who is unpredictable
Virile	Having strength, energy, and a strong sex drive

Essential Reading

Prior to beginning the course in September, you need to have read the set texts:

- A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams
- 'A Raisin in the Sun' by Lorraine Hansberry.
- 'The Great Gatsby' by F Scott Fitzgerald

Wider Reading & Resources

Voices in Speech and Writing

Log on to [Gresham College](#). Here you will find a variety of hour-long lectures on a variety of subjects.

[A Streetcar Critical Essays booklet.docx](#)

Varieties in Language and Literature

[Be prepared Gatsby wider reading booklet.pptx](#)

[Articles - Raisin in the Sun](#)

Non examination assessment

[Guide to Generic Conventions.pdf](#)

Academic Writing

Expressing your ideas with clarity and detail are important. Use the following sentence stems to help you structure your ideas.

To introduce

This essay discusses ...	... is explored ...	... is defined ...
The definition of ... will be given	... is briefly outlined ...	... is explored ...
The issue focused on	... is demonstrated ...	... is included ...
In this essay	... is explained ...	... are identified ...
The key aspect discussed ...	... are presented ...	... is justified ...
Views on range from	... is evaluated ...	... is examined ...
The central theme ...	... is described ...	... is analysed ...
Emphasised are ...	... is explained and illustrated with examples ...	

To conclude

In summary, ...	To review, ...	In conclusion, ...
In brief, ...	To summarise, ...	To sum up, ...
To conclude, ...	Thus, ...	Hence, ...
It has been shown that, ...	In short, ...	

To give examples

For example, ...	... as can be seen in ...	... supports ...
For instance, ...	... as demonstrated by ...	... is observed ...
Specifically, ...	... is shown ...	... exemplifies ...
Such as ...	As an example ...	To illustrate, ...

To add ideas

Also, ...	Equally important ...	Subsequently, ...
Futhermore, ...	Moreover, ...	As well as
Next...	Another essential point...	Additionally, ...
More importantly, ...	In the same way ...	Another ...
Then, ...	In addition, ...	Besides, ...
Then again, ...	Firstly, ... secondly, ... thirdly, ... finally, ...	To elaborate, ...

To present prior or background ideas

In the past, ...	Historically, ...	Traditionally, ...
Customarily, ...	Beforehand, ...	Originally, ...
Prior to this, ...	Earlier, ...	Formerly, ...
Previously, ...	Over time, ...	At the time of ...
Conventionally, ...	Foundational to this is ...	In earlier ...
Initially, ...	At first, ...	Recently ...
Until now, ...	The traditional interpretation ...	

To present others' ideas

According to ...	Based on the findings of ... it can be argued...	... proposed that ...
As explained by ...	... states that ...	... claims that ...
However, ... stated that ...	... suggested ...	... concluded that ...
Similarly, ... stated that	... for example, ...	... agreed that ...
Based on the ideas of ...	... defined as	... relates ...
As identified by ...	... disputed that ...	... contrasts ...
With regard to ... argued that ...	... concluded that ...	... confirmed that ...
... argues	... highlights ...	... demonstrates ...
... found that ...	... identifies ...	... wrote that ...
... demonstrated ...	... also ...	... reported
... pointed out that ...	... maintained that ...	... hypothesised that ...
... expressed the opinion that ...	... also mentioned	... asserts that
... identified ...	... goes on to state/suggest/say	... emphasises
... challenges the idea	... showed that ...	... explored the idea ...

To keep the 'I' out of academic writing

It can be argued...	Arguably...	It may be that...
This assignment will present the following point of view...	Some theorists, notably Bloggs (1990) and Jones (1992) have argued...	There are two sides to this question. Firstly ...
Another point of view suggests however, that ...	This assignment will attempt to show that...	In conclusion it can be argued that...
It can seen that...	One point of view is that ...	However ...

Academic Writing - Understanding the question

- **Decipher the Prompt:** Read the question carefully, ensuring you understand what it requires.
- Identify keywords and directives (e.g., explore, analyse, discuss) to guide your response.

Essay structure

Introduction: Begin with a compelling introduction. Provide background information and context, leading up to your thesis statement. Engage the reader and outline the essay's structure.

Body Paragraphs: Each paragraph should focus on a specific point or argument supporting your thesis. Begin with a topic sentence, provide evidence, and then analyse and link it back to your thesis.

Transitioning: Ensure smooth transitions between paragraphs and sections. Use linking words and phrases to connect ideas and maintain the essay's coherence.

Conclusion: Recap your argument without introducing new information. Emphasise the significance of your thesis and the broader implications of your exploration.

Academic Writing - Thesis formation

- **Clear Argument:** Craft a strong, clear, and specific thesis statement that addresses the essay prompt.
- Your thesis should articulate your main argument(s) and set the tone for the entire essay.

Intro/thesis example

In this extract from Scene 2 of Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire' Stanley Kowalski emerges as a complex embodiment of raw, unrestrained masculinity and a catalyst for inevitable conflict. This scene serves as a pivotal moment in the play with Williams setting the stage for the rising tension and the emergence of the power dynamics that unfold, leading to the play's ultimate, tragic conclusion. **Stanley's dominance** is key, with Williams employing stage direction, authoritative dialogue and an emphasis on his animalistic physicality. His pragmatic realism is in stark **contrast to Blanche's** fragile sensibilities, with Williams engineering the early clash with Blanche to highlight the broader thematic tension between the Old and the New South. His commanding presence and forceful **interactions with Stella** demonstrate his control over the domestic sphere and cement his masculinity for the audience.

Academic Writing - Academic language and style

- **Formal Tone:** Use a formal and academic tone, avoiding casual language and contractions. Duffy: discuss the 'speaker' or 'persona' remember to separate Duffy the poet and the poetic voice. Write with distance, impersonal, avoid 'In this essay I'm going to...'
- **Varied Sentence Structure:** Incorporate a mix of sentence structures to enhance expression
- **Precise Vocabulary:** Choose words that precisely convey your intended meaning. Avoid ambiguous or overly simplistic and also overly complex language.

Formal tone

Stanley Kowalski's character epitomises the embodiment of stark realism within the context of the play.

Williams employs Stanley as a representation of the brutish facets of humanity, aptly contrasting him with the delicate fragility of Blanche DuBois. The dramatist conveys the trajectory of Stanley's aggression through meticulously crafted dialogues and stage directions.

Varied sentence structure

In juxtaposition to Blanche's escapist tendencies, Stanley, a working-class individual, clings resolutely to his roots. His unwavering commitment to the real world is evident in his relentless pursuit of the truth: "You think I'm gonna interfere with you? You want me to interfere with you?"

Furthermore, Stanley's volatility is vividly illustrated through his oscillation between explosive fits of rage and moments of calculated manipulation. **While at one instance,** he vents his frustration in a tumultuous uproar, **at another,** he cunningly gathers evidence against Blanche.

In considering Stanley's character evolution, one must scrutinise the subtle transformation from an emblem of virility to a symbol of moral decay. **This metamorphosis** encapsulates the multifaceted nature of Williams' creation.

Academic Writing - Precise vocabulary

- Stanley's unwavering attachment to the tangible, unforgiving reality of life underscores his character as a quintessential symbol of the proletariat.
- Williams employs Stanley as an archetypal embodiment of raw masculinity, juxtaposed against the ephemeral illusions and pretensions of the Old South.
- Stanley's deliberate acts of subversion underscore his pivotal role in the ultimate downfall of Blanche DuBois, revealing his cunning and manipulative nature.

Conclusion

Reassert the Thesis: Restate your thesis statement but avoid simply copying it word for word. Reformulate it to emphasise your main argument.
No new ideas

Summarise Key Points: Recap the main arguments presented in the body paragraphs. Provide a brief summary of the evidence and its significance in supporting your thesis. Maintain formal style, don't veer into personal opinions

Connect Back to the text: Relate your discussion back to the literary work. Discuss how your arguments reflect the themes, characters, or narrative elements in the text

Consider Broader Implications: Discuss the broader implications or relevance of your analysis. Consider how the themes or issues explored in the text relate to the real world or other literary works

Offer a Final reflection: Provide a concluding thought or reflection that leaves a memorable impact on the reader. This could be a thought-provoking idea, a question, or a comment on the significance of the text.

Key Skills - Voices in Speech and Writing

For this component you will need to explore aspects of voice, and the factors that shape it, that are relevant to your exploration of non-literary texts and your chosen drama text. Aspects that you should consider include:

- the importance of contextual factors in shaping the content of a text and the voices it contains
- the literary, linguistic and graphological conventions applied in a range of exemplar text types and the effects they produce
- the language choices made by writers or speakers in order to conform to (or manipulate) generic convention
- how writers and speakers use language to meet the expectations of audience and purpose
- the selection of evidence which links to a specific task
- the application of linguistic/literary terminology to the exploration of texts and to the examples drawn from these texts to evidence method and/or effect
- how a text is structured to meet the conventions of genre, the expectations of the audience and the objectives of the writer
- the way the writer has conveyed a sense of authentic speech through written monologue or dialogue
- how a playwright uses literary and language techniques to develop voice, character, plot and theme
- the integration of literary/linguistic terms and integrating this effectively into a critical and analytical written response based on their set drama text.

Example exam question

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams develops the dramatic significance of the Kowalski apartment in Elysian Fields. In your answer, you must consider Williams' use of linguistic and literary features and relevant contextual factors.

BLANCHE comes around the corner, carrying a valise. She looks at a slip of paper, then at the building, then again at the slip and again at the building. Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting. She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and ear-rings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district. She is about five years older than STELLA. Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth.

EUNICE [finally]: What's the matter, honey? Are you lost?

BLANCHE [with faintly hysterical humour]: They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields!

EUNICE: That's where you are now.

BLANCHE: At Elysian Fields?

EUNICE: This here is Elysian Fields.

BLANCHE: They mustn't have–understood–what number I wanted . . .

EUNICE: What number you lookin' for?

BLANCHE wearily refers to the slip of paper.

BLANCHE: Six thirty-two.

EUNICE: You don't have to look no further.

BLANCHE [uncomprehendingly]: I'm looking for my sister, Stella DuBois. I mean – Mrs Stanley Kowalski.

EUNICE: That's the party. – You just did miss her, though. BLANCHE: This – can this be – her home?

EUNICE: She's got the downstairs here and I got the up.

BLANCHE: Oh. She's – out?

EUNICE: You noticed that bowling alley around the corner?

BLANCHE: I'm – not sure I did.

EUNICE: Well, that's where she's at, watchin' her husband bowl. [There is a pause.] You want to leave your suitcase here an' go find her?

BLANCHE: No.

WOMAN: I'll go tell her you come.

BLANCHE: Thanks.

WOMAN: You welcome. [She goes out.] EUNICE: She wasn't expecting you?

BLANCHE: No. No, not tonight.

EUNICE: Well, why don't you just go in and make yourself at home till they get back.

BLANCHE: How could I – do that?

Example exam question

EUNICE: We own this place so I can let you in. She gets up and opens the downstairs door. A light goes on behind the blind, turning it light blue.

BLANCHE slowly follows her into the downstairs flat. The surrounding areas dim out as the interior is lighted. Two rooms can be seen, not too clearly defined. The one first entered is primarily a kitchen but contains a folding bed to be used by

BLANCHE. The room beyond this is a bedroom. Off this room is a narrow door to a bathroom.

EUNICE [defensively, noticing BLANCHE'S look]: It's sort of messed up right now but when it's clean it's real sweet.

BLANCHE: Is it?

EUNICE: Uh-huh, I think so. So you're Stella's sister?

BLANCHE: Yes. [Wanting to get rid of her.] Thanks for letting me in.

EUNICE: Por nada, as the Mexicans say, por nada! Stella spoke of you.

BLANCHE: Yes?

EUNICE: I think she said you taught school.

BLANCHE: Yes.

EUNICE: And you're from Mississippi, huh?

BLANCHE: Yes.

EUNICE: She showed me a picture of your home-place, the plantation.

BLANCHE: Belle Reve?

EUNICE: A great big place with white columns.

This extract is drawn from the opening scene of the play. Williams is highly detailed in establishing his setting, as all the real-time action of the play takes place in, or just outside, the Kowalski apartment in Elysian Fields. From the start, Blanche appears incongruous to the industrialised, working class and multicultural New South that Elysian Fields symbolically and literally represents. The setting emphasises the fragility of Blanche and, contrasting as it does, with the illusory grandeur of Belle Reve, represents some of the central conflicts of the play.

Tasks

Close Language Analysis

Select 3–4 quotations from the extract that present Blanche’s reaction to Elysian Fields. Analyse how Williams uses language and stage directions to convey her sense of shock and displacement. Aim to use terminology such as *stage directions*, *metaphor*, and *semantic field*.

Exploring Symbolism

Write a short paragraph explaining the significance of the streetcar journey: “Desire... Cemeteries... Elysian Fields”. What do these names symbolise? How do they foreshadow Blanche’s fate? Extension: Include a reference to classical or mythological ideas.

The Apartment as a Dramatic Space

Using evidence from the extract, explain how the Kowalski apartment is presented. Then, add at least one example from elsewhere in the play where the setting creates conflict. Focus on ideas such as lack of privacy, confinement, and tension.

Context in Action

Research one contextual factor (e.g. post-WWII America, changing class structures, gender roles, or multicultural New Orleans). Write a short paragraph explaining how this context helps us understand the significance of Elysian Fields and the Kowalski apartment. Try to link context directly to a moment in the extract.

Excerpt from a model response

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Williams constructs the Kowalski apartment in Elysian Fields as a crucial dramatic space through which conflict, characterisation and thematic tension are intensified. The extract immediately establishes the apartment not merely as a physical setting but as a symbolic arena where contrasting worlds collide. Through detailed stage directions, linguistic contrast and layered symbolism, Williams develops Elysian Fields as both a site of entrapment and a microcosm of post-war American society, exposing tensions between old Southern gentility and modern urban realism.

From Blanche's first entrance, Williams foregrounds the dramatic significance of the apartment through visual and symbolic incongruity. The stage directions emphasise her "shocked disbelief", immediately positioning Elysian Fields as alien and hostile to her identity. Her "daintily dressed" appearance, culminating in the central metaphor of a "moth", encodes fragility and transience, suggesting she is both out of place and drawn toward inevitable destruction. This is intensified by the symbolic journey she recounts, "a streetcar named Desire... Cemeteries... Elysian Fields" which operates as a structural and mythic foreshadowing. The classical allusion to Elysian Fields, associated with the afterlife, is deeply ironic: rather than a place of peace, the Kowalski apartment becomes a site of psychological and moral decay. Williams thus uses the setting to prefigure Blanche's tragic trajectory, embedding her fate within the geography of New Orleans itself.

Williams further develops the apartment's dramatic significance through linguistic contrast and social realism. Eunice's colloquial voice, "What number you lookin' for?" is marked by non-standard grammar and phonetic spelling, reflecting the informal, multicultural milieu of Elysian Fields. This sharply contrasts with Blanche's hesitant, increasingly non-fluent speech, punctuated by pauses and modal uncertainty, "This – can this be – her home?", which conveys her psychological instability and discomfort. The reformulation from "Stella DuBois" to "Mrs Stanley Kowalski" signals the intrusion of a new social order, where patriarchal and immigrant identities supersede the fading aristocracy of the Old South. The apartment itself, revealed through precise stage directions as cramped and lacking privacy, reinforces this tension. Its two-room structure forces intimacy and conflict, later intensifying Stanley's hostility toward Blanche as an "intruder" in his domain. In this way, Williams uses both linguistic and spatial features to transform the apartment into a pressure point where broader cultural shifts, particularly those of post-war America, are enacted and contested.