



Saint Benedict
Catholic Voluntary Academy

2026

**BE
PREPARED**



**English
Literature**



St Ralph
Sherwin
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

English Literature

- The Course
- Key Terminology
- Essential Reading
- Theories
- Websites
- Academic Writing
- Skills

English Literature

9ET0 Pearson Edexcel

Units

9ET0/01 Drama

You will study 'Othello' and 'A Streetcar Named Desire'

9ET0/02 Prose

You will study 'Frankenstein' and 'The Handmaid's Tale'

9ET0/03 Poetry

You will study Post- 2000 Poetry from 'Poems of the Decade' and selected poems of Christina Rossetti'.

9ET0/04 NEA- Coursework

You select your own choice of two texts. This can be poetry, drama, prose or literary non-fiction. It has to be different to examination texts.

You must write one comparative essay 2500-3000 words.

Texts in translation are not allowed.

What you need to bring to your first English lesson and every lesson thereafter:

- 1 A4 ringbinder folder
- 1 A4 lined pad of paper or a notebook
- 2 black/blue pens
- 1 red pen

Terminology

Allegory	a metaphorical story with a moral message
Anagnorises	The point in a text when a character realises the true identity of another character or the true nature of their own circumstances
Anarchy	a state of lawlessness and disorder (usually resulting from a failure of government)
Antagonist	the main character who opposes the protagonist in a narrative or play
Antithetical	Directly opposing to
Blank Verse	Written or spoken language in its ordinary form, without metrical structure.
Catharsis	The purging of the feelings of pity and fear that occur in the audience of tragic drama.
Climax	The turning point of the action in the plot of a play or story.
Comic relief	The use of a comic scene to interrupt intensely tragic dramatic moments and parallel the tragic action.
Denouement	The final part of a play when the strands of a plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved
Dictator	a ruler who is unconstrained by law
Dramatic irony	A literary technique, originally used in Greek tragedy, by which the full significance of a character's words or actions is clear to the audience or reader although unknown to the character.
Exposition	The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided.
Foil	A device that uses a character to contrast or highlight the traits of another character
Foreshadowing	A warning or indication of (a future event).
Hamartia	A fatal moral flaw in a protagonist of a tragedy
Hubris	Excessive pride or arrogance in a character that offends leads to their downfall
Ideology	an orientation that characterizes the thinking of a group or nation
Irony	Irony is an incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs, although this is not a completely satisfactory definition because true irony involves some form of deceit, duplicity, or hypocrisy, be it intentional or accidental.

Juxtaposition	The act of placing two words or ideas side by side for effect, especially for contrast or comparison. It is a literary device which is employed to bring out similarities and differences between two situations, thoughts, characters or emotions. In placing them together, the writer highlights a detail for the reader.
Motif	An object or idea that is repeated throughout a text to help to explain a theme
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.
Peripeteia	A sudden reversal in fortune or change in circumstances for a character
Protagonist	the principal character in a work of fiction
Recognition	The point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is.
Resolution	The sorting out or unravelling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story.
Satire	witty language used to convey insults or scorn
Soliloquy	An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when by oneself or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play.
Totalitarianism	a form of government in which the ruler is an absolute dictator
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.

Essential Reading

You must read the following texts.

- Shakespeare, 'Othello'
- Tennessee Williams, 'A Streetcar Named Desire'
- Mary Shelley, 'Frankenstein'
- Margaret Atwood, 'The Handmaid's Tale'

Theories

Theory	Summary
Feminism	A feminist critic will look at a piece of literature and reveal the extent to which the writing presents the subordination and oppression of women. Feminism reveals and challenges the cultural shaping of gender roles and practices. It exposes how, in plays in novels and other writing, patriarchal ideology distorts, ignores or represses that experience, misrepresenting how women feel, think or act. Feminism explorations of literature also celebrate where women contest male power.
Psychoanalysis	Sigmund Freud was the founding father of psychoanalysis. He argues that actions and motives do not simply spring from conscious, rational sources, but that unconscious desires and repressed memories also play an important role. A psychoanalytical study of a text includes focuses on a character study, exploring a character's feelings and personal relationships.
Post colonialism	Focuses on the influence of colonialism in literature, especially regarding the historical conflict resulting from the exploitation of less developed countries and their people.
Queer Theory	Looks at the role of gender identity and sexuality in literature.
Political Perspective: New Historicism	Considers a text as a product of its historical context, arguing that true meaning is found in a text's historical context.
Marxism	Emphasises the themes of class conflict in texts, including how rich people oppress the poor people in order to get richer. Critics associated with this theory include Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton.

Websites

National Theatre Live – streaming plays for free

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>

Gutenberg Project Top 100 e-texts

<https://www.gutenberg.org/browse/scores/top>

Literary websites

<https://poetrysociety.org.uk/>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

<https://www.the-tls.co.uk/>

Exam Board

[https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-](https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-2015.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FExam-materials)

[2015.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FExam-materials](https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-2015.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FExam-materials)

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 ...

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.

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 language and style

- **Formal Tone:** Use a formal and academic tone, avoiding casual language and contractions. Rossetti: discuss the 'speaker' or 'persona' remember to separate Rossetti 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 examples

- 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 examples

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.

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.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through an exploration of (themes/characters/elements), it becomes evident that (restate thesis). The analysis of (key points) highlights the (broader themes) within the text and their implications on/for (broader significance). As (name the text) delves into (themes/characters), it offers a profound reflection on (closing thought)

Tennessee Williams portrays Stanley Kowalski as a compelling embodiment of stark, unyielding masculinity and as a catalyst for the collision between conflicting worlds. Williams crafts a character that not only dominates the scene but also serves as a vehicle for the clash of ideologies. Through the strategic use of vivid stage directions, intense physicality, and confrontational dialogues, this clash becomes the pivotal point upon which the Stanley's assertive presence and aggressive demeanour is established. Indeed, this scene serves as a microcosm of the power dynamics embedded in the play. The complexity of Stanley's character and the inherent discord he embodies underscore Williams' exploration of societal upheaval and the inevitable clash of cultural values, thus cementing his enduring significance within the narrative landscape of 'A Streetcar Named Desire'.

Skills- Interpretation

Explore the presentation of outsiders in Shakespeare's *Othello*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

What do you have to do?

You have to address the focus of the question, using reference to the texts, analyse the writer's methods and relate it to context.

Model Paragraph:

Shakespeare constructs *Othello* as a tragedy in which outsider status is not merely a social position but a dramatic mechanism that exposes the fragility of identity. Othello's racial and cultural difference is foregrounded through the language others use to define him: Iago's bestial imagery ("an old black ram") does more than signal prejudice — it frames Othello as a figure onto whom Venetian anxieties about race, sexuality, and power can be projected. Shakespeare's choice to let the audience first encounter Othello through these hostile descriptions positions him as an outsider before he even speaks, creating a structural tension between how he is perceived and how he presents himself. When Othello later adopts the Venetian rhetoric of honour and rationality, his eloquence ("Rude am I in my speech") reveals an internalised awareness of his precarious position. Contextually, early modern Venice was imagined as both cosmopolitan and deeply hierarchical, and Shakespeare uses this contradiction to heighten Othello's vulnerability.

Task

Have a go! This line is from Othello. We don't expect you to know the entire plot, but use it to practise your own interpretation skills

“O, beware, my lord, of jealousy! It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on.”

(Act 3, Scene 3)

How does Shakespeare explore the theme of jealousy in the play?

Skills- Analysis

Explore the ways in which Rossetti presents the passing of time in 'Piteous my rhyme'.

What do you have to do?

You have to address the focus of the question, and select relevant features of language, structure or form. You must explore the effect the writer creates and link it to the question focus.

Piteous my rhyme is
What while I muse of love and pain,
Of love misspent, of love in vain,
Of love that is not loved again:
And is this all then?
As long as time is,
Love loveth. Time is but a span,
The dalliance space of dying man:
And is this all immortals can?
The gain were small then.

Love loves for ever,
And finds a sort of joy in pain,
And gives with nought to take again,
And loves too well to end in vain:
Is the gain small then?
Love laughs at "never",
Outlives our life, exceeds the span
Appointed to mere mortal man:
All which love is and does and can
Is all in all then.

Model Paragraph

In "*Piteous my rhyme*," Rossetti presents the passing of time as a force that erodes both poetic power and emotional certainty. The speaker's lament that her "rhyme is weak and scant" signals a self-conscious awareness of decline, with the adjective "scant" suggesting that time has diminished her creative vitality. Rossetti's use of a retrospective voice intensifies this sense of loss: the poem is structured around looking back at a moment of youthful passion that can no longer be recovered.

This temporal distance is reinforced through the contrast between past intensity and present frailty, implying that time has thinned both memory and feeling. The poem's steady, regular rhythm ironically underscores the inevitability of temporal progression, as if the form itself mimics the relentless movement of time.

Contextually, Rossetti's preoccupation with transience reflects broader Victorian anxieties about mutability and the instability of earthly attachments, shaped by her Tractarian belief that worldly experiences fade while spiritual truths endure. Ultimately, Rossetti presents time as a force that diminishes human capability yet clarifies emotional truth.

Task

Explore the ways in which Rossetti presents death in Echo.

Echo

BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

Oh dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
My very life again tho' cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.