

# Key Stage 4.5

## English Literature

### A-Level Preparation Booklet

Name

---

#### **This Booklet**

This booklet forms the basis of the knowledge you will need to succeed in your studies of English Literature at A-Level at Hammersmith Academy.

There are different tasks covering a range of topics you will study. Aim to complete at least 1 of each:

- A preparation task for set texts

These tasks are to be completed alongside the reading of set-texts. Before the first term starts, you should buy and read the texts below in **bold**. The others you will also be expected to purchase as the year continues. These can be bought from second hand, charity if you can find or new from bookshops and Amazon.

- ***A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams**
- ***Othello* by William Shakespeare**
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
- *Poems of the Decade* poetry anthology
- Various poems by Christina Rossetti

The stronger your knowledge of these texts (including quotations, key ideas, themes, character and their contexts), the easier you will find English at A-Level.

#### **Completing the Tasks**

Lines/space has not been left as this booklet is meant to be primarily used virtually; as you type in your notes, do so by working to the subheadings or indicators on the page, the rest of the booklet will simply move down as you type. Some of the tasks are likely to be easier completed on paper, using the headings given in this booklet, copied down.

#### **A Note on Reading**

At A-Level, texts are read independently; this means that you will not read as a class as at GCSE and before. If you are a person who likes to read and who has read many novels outside of the texts covered in school, then this course is for you.

As you read the texts, it is good practice to make notes as you go – highlighting key quotations, annotating with any ideas you have, adding post-its or folding down pages on key sections. Then, as with GCSE, creating flashcards as you go to ensure that you spread your workload across the year.

## A Streetcar Named Desire: Great Lives

Listen to the 30min [podcast](#) on the life of Tennessee Williams; make notes on the key features of his life – which would have the greatest impact on his writing? Note down your key findings.

Compare to the presentation of Williams and his writing in this Guardian article, '[Tennessee Williams: the quiet revolutionary](#)'.

## Frankenstein: Everything you need to know

Linked is a clip from [TedEd](#) boldly stating it contains everything you need to know before reading *Frankenstein* – hopefully so. Note down everything you need to know.

## Othello: Shakespearean Tragedy

Read [this article](#) from the British Library and summarise the elements of what is meant by tragedy and also what is meant by 'Shakespearean tragedy'. Note down the key characters or plays that the article claims best represent Shakespearean Tragedy.

Tragedy

Shakespearean Tragedy

## The Handmaid's Tale: Dystopia

Use the [article](#) here alongside your own [research](#) to explore what is meant by the genre of dystopia.

Origins / Literal meaning

Types of dystopia and examples: Summarise what makes that text a dystopia

*Nineteen Eighty Four*

*The Road*

*Brave New World*

Atwood's own [article](#) on *Brave New World*; summarise her ideas.

## A Streetcar Named Desire: Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

This play was also written by Tennessee Williams and explores many of the ideas in *Streetcar*; there is also a greater sense of autobiography in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, allowing a mediated glimpse into Williams' own view of his life.

### [Cat on a Hot Tin Roof](#)

As you watch this (approx. 45 mins), it is worth noting ideas about the presentation of the American Dream, of what we would now call 'toxic masculinity' and the presentation of loyalties, class and America as a whole. Each of these themes flow directly around *Streetcar*.

Toxic Masculinity: Read [this article](#) and summarise what 'toxic masculinity' is. What are the main arguments of this article and do you agree with them?

## Frankenstein: In Our Time

Listen to the [podcast](#) on Shelley's *Frankenstein*; this podcast gives a fantastic overview of the text, the context, the key ideas and the influence the novel had over the history of literature. Note down the key elements under the following headings:

The narrative

Mary Shelley

Ideas at the time  
impact

The monster

The

## *Othello*: Machiavelli and Manipulation

Shakespeare presents Iago as manipulative, amoral and seemingly evil – these ideas had been explored by others before him (Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* or even the character of Aaron in Shakespeare's own *Titus Andronicus*), however many ideas are said to stem from the political work of the Italian [Niccolò Machiavelli](#). His work, written to advise princes in war-hungry Italian city-states how to be the best leader, famously stating 'it would be best to be both loved and feared. But since the two rarely come together, anyone compelled to choose will find greater security in being feared than in being loved.'

Watch these clips and summarise Machiavelli's ideas

[Political Theory: Machiavelli](#)

[What 'Machiavellian' Really Means](#)

[Machiavelli's Advice For](#)

[Nice Guys](#)

[Machiavelli's key ideas](#)

[Links to Iago in \*Othello\*](#)

## *The Handmaid's Tale: The Second Sex*

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is a foundational text on modern feminism; the questions asked resonate today and can be found (whether explicitly or implicitly) in every text written after its publication. Note the ideas on gender and the treatment of women in society – the text began its writing in 1946; how much change has there been?

Here is an [extract](#) from the introduction to a recent edition of the major text. Make notes below on De Beauvoir's life, the context she was growing up in, and the key ideas that have become the foundation of modern feminism.

Watch this video '[What would Simone de Beauvoir make of #metoo?](#)' and add your thoughts below.

[De Beauvoir's life](#)

[De Beauvoir's ideas](#)

[Links to \*The Handmaid's Tale\*](#)