

# Preparing for A Level English Literature



The first module that you will study on the A Level English Literature course is called 'Modern Times'.

In this unit, you'll study a drama text, a novel and a collection of poetry, all of which have been written after 1945; you'll have to consider how these texts have been shaped by their modern contexts e.g social and political changes, significant events, shifting attitudes and ideologies.

**To prepare you for this, the English Department would like you to do the following tasks:**

1) **Produce a collage to represent 'Modern Times'**. Use a combination of research into key events (social/political e.g the Civil Rights Movement, legalisation of gay marriage, #metoo) since 1945, but also your own interpretation of the world in which we are currently living – you've probably got some interesting ideas and views about this at the moment! Make it bold, visual and include any short snippets of text that you think capture something important e.g newspaper headlines, quotes from famous people etc. Your collage can either be physically made on a sheet of A3 or you could do it as a Powerpoint slide/Prezi; it's entirely up to you.

2) **Choose at least 1 text from the Modern Times Text Recommendations list (read more than 1, if you have time) or read another title by one of the writers listed.** Some of the suggested books have good film adaptations so you might want to choose one with a film attached and watch this too (though check the age certificate and make sure you get parental permission first if necessary). As you read, make some notes on how typical modern times themes are explored.

Themes might include:

- Identity
- Fragmented society
- Race and Prejudice

- Gender
- Feminism
- Conflict
- Isolation
- Oppression
- Alienation
- Truth (and questioning 'truth')

**3) Prepare an interesting way to present your book to the rest of your A level English class in**

**September.** Be imaginative and get creative! You could choose to: recreate a scene and do a short film; write and perform/record a song; create a piece of artwork/ an artefact; design and make a costume or some props; anything else you'd like to do! Please make sure that you complete your work to the highest standard you can manage. You will be expected to present it during the first 2 weeks of the A Level course in September.

### **Modern Times Text Recommendations**

#### **Novels**

Lessons in Chemistry - Bonnie Garmus

Hamnet – Maggie O'Farrell

The Midnight Library – Matt Haigh

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings – Maya Angelou

Case Histories – Kate Atkinson

Empress Orchid – Anchee Min

On Beauty – Zadie Smith

Wise Children – Angela Carter

Ariadne – Jennifer Saint

Purple Hibiscus – Chimamanda Adiche

The Magic Toyshop – Angela Carter

The Silence of the Girls – Pat Barker

The Bell Jar – Sylvia Plath

The Little Stranger – Sarah Waters

American Dirt – Jeanine Cummins

My Sister The Serial Killer – Oyinkan Braithwaite

A Thousand Splendid Suns – Khaled Hosseini

The Road – Cormack McCarthy

On The Road – Jack Kerouac

The Greatcoat – Helen Dunmore

The Catcher in The Rye – J.D Salinger

### **Novels with Films**

Where The Crawdads Sing – Delia Owens

We Need to Talk About Kevin – Lionel Shriver

The Color Purple – Alice Walker

The Handmaid's Tale – Margaret Atwood (this is a TV series available on All 4)

Atonement – Ian McEwan

Gone Girl – Gillian Flynn

Water for Elephants – Sarah Gruen

The Help – Kathryn Stockett

Memoires of a Geisha – Arthur Golden

A Clockwork Orange – Anthony Burgess

The Time Traveller's Wife – Audrey Niffenegger

One Day – David Nicholls

Hidden Figures – Margot Lee Shetterly

Lolita – Vladimir Nabokov

Fight Club – Chuck Palahniuk

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? – Philip K. Dick (the film Bladerunner is loosely based on this)

Or, alternatively, choose any text by one of the writers listed above.