



The Thomas Hardy School
Summer Preparation Task
English Literature A Level

Purpose of task:

To develop skills in analysing literature.
To begin to learn about the background of the topic area chosen

Recommended resources:

Task:

Instructions for the summer task for A Level English Literature.
Choose **ONE** of the different topic areas:

- 1 American Literature
- 2 Dystopian Literature
- 3 Gothic Literature
- 4 Women in Literature

Watch one of the film trailers or documentaries from your chosen topic and make some notes on what you have learned about the topic area from watching the trailer. Then read the extract and answer the questions at the end. Remember to use details from the text to support your ideas.

There are extension tasks for most of the topics if you would like more reading to complete.

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

American Literature 1880 - 1940:

Relevant documentary on F Scott Fitzgerald: BBC Sincerely, F Scott Fitzgerald (narrated by Jay McInerney): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCfUsaX5F10>

Extract from F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*:

This semi-autobiographical novel, Fitzgerald's last, was written when his fortunes were declining. It tells the story of Dick Diver, a psychiatrist and his wife Nicole, who is also one of his patients. Dick's descent into alcoholism and Nicole's psychological instability reflected true life, as Fitzgerald couldn't escape the grip of alcoholism and his wife Zelda was institutionalised. Some consider the Fitzgeralds' rise and fall to expose the failings of the American Dream and the problems of modern celebrity culture.

With Nicole's help Rosemary bought two dresses and two hats and four pairs of shoes with her money. Nicole bought from a great list that ran two pages, and bought the things in the windows besides. Everything she liked that she couldn't possibly use herself, she bought as a present for a friend. She bought colored beads, folding beach cushions, artificial flowers, honey, a guest bed, bags, scarfs, love birds, miniatures for a doll's house and three yards of some new cloth the color of prawns. She bought a dozen bathing suits, a rubber alligator, a travelling chess set of gold and ivory, big linen handkerchiefs for Abe, two chamois leather jackets of kingfisher blue and burning bush from Hermes—bought all these things not a bit like a high-class courtesan buying underwear and jewels, which were after all professional equipment and insurance—but with an entirely different point of view. Nicole was the product of much ingenuity and toil. For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belts grew link by link in factories; men mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads; girls canned tomatoes quickly in August or worked rudely at the Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve; half-breed Indians toiled on Brazilian coffee plantations and dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors—these were some of the people who gave a tithe to Nicole, and as the whole system swayed and thundered onward it lent a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying, like the flush of a fireman's face holding his post before a spreading blaze. She illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom, but illustrated them so accurately that there was grace in the procedure, and presently Rosemary would try to imitate it.

Questions: What do you learn about the two characters here and their surroundings?

What kind of shopping is happening here? Clue: look at what is bought, and in what order. Think about what, if anything, is essential, and what you would consider to be frivolous.

Can you say anything about the narrative perspective here? What are your views of these two characters and why?

Extension task of wider reading suggestions

Visit your local library and seek out one of these texts to read.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Other Stories*

Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove*

Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*

Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Extension task - Research task:

Create a timeline of the major events in American History between 1880 and 1940. Why do you think 1880 was chosen as the start point for this study of American literature? Why does the topic end at 1940?

Consider concepts such as:

The origins of the American Dream

The representation of women – the rise of the ‘New Woman’

The legacy of slavery

The Jazz Age – Prohibition and the rise of Organised Crime

The Wall Street Crash and The Great Depression

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

Dystopian Literature:

Dystopian books on film. Watch one of these film trailers which can easily be found on Youtube by typing in the name of the film followed by official trailer:

Minority Report: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG7DGMgfOb8>

The Island: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZyNJ3cKfEg

War of the Worlds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaasllkad1Q>

Children of Men: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VT2apoX90o>

The Hunger Games: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfmrPu43DF8>

Look at when the film was released. Do you notice anything particularly timely? For example, 'War of the Worlds' was released in 2005 and is full of post- 9/11 anxieties surrounding terrorism and destruction. One of the striking images of the film depicts the protagonists running away covered in grey ash, a shocking echo of the pervasive images of just a few years before.

What do you learn about the Dystopian genre, and why do you think it is still so popular in 21st society?

Reading task. Read the openings of these two Dystopian texts and make notes on them. There are some questions at the end of each extract to give you some ideas.

Extract 1 Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924)

This seminal dystopian novel is thought to have inspired George Orwell's 1984. Zamyatin's novel is set in the 26th century and depicts life in the restrictive totalitarian regime of OneState, ruled over by the all-powerful 'Benefactor.' It is an exploration of the risks of abandoning the individual self to a collective dream of a technological future.

'RECORD 1

Announcement

The Wisest of Lines

An Epic Poem

I am merely copying out here, word for word, what was printed today in the *State Gazette*:

In 120 days from now the building of the INTEGRAL will be finished. Near at hand is the great, historic hour when the first INTEGRAL will lift off into space. A thousand years ago your heroic forbears subjugated the whole of planet Earth to the power of OneState. It is for you to accomplish an even more glorious feat: by means of the glass, the electric, the fire-breathing INTEGRAL to integrate the indefinite equation of the universe. It is for you to place the beneficial yoke of reason round the necks of the unknown beings who inhabit other planets – still living, it may be, in the primitive state known as freedom. If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically infallible happiness, we shall be obliged to force them to be happy. But before taking up arms, we shall try what words can do.

In the name of the Benefactor, all Numbers of OneState are hereby informed of the following:

Everyone who feels himself capable of doing so is required to compose treatises, epic poems, manifestos, odes, or other compositions dealing with the beauty and grandeur of OneState.

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

This will be the first cargo transported by the INTEGRAL.

Long live OneState! Long live the Numbers! Long live the Benefactor!

As I write this I feel my cheeks burning. Yes: to integrate completely the colossal equation of the universe. Yes: to unbend the wild curve, to straighten it tangentially, asymptotically, to flatten it to an undeviating line. The great, divine, precise, wise, straight line – the wisest of all lines...

I, D-503, builder of the INTEGRAL, I am only one of the mathematicians of OneState. My pen, accustomed to figures, is powerless to create the music of assonance and rhyme. I shall attempt nothing more than to note down what I see, what I think – or, to be more exact, what we think (that's right: we, and let this WE be the title of those records). But this, surely, will be a derivative of our life, the mathematically perfect life of OneState, and if that is so, then won't this be, of its own accord, whatever I may wish, an epic? It will; I believe and know that it will.

I feel my cheeks burning as I write this. This is probably what a woman feels like when she first sense in her the pulse of a new little person, still tiny and blind. It's me, and at the same time it's not me. And for long months to come she will have to nourish it with her own juice, her own blood, and then – tear it painfully out of herself and lay it at the feet of OneState.

But I am ready. Like all of us, or nearly all of us. I am ready.'

Questions – what do you learn about the narrator?

What do you learn about the narrator's world?

How is that world different from our own, and how might it be similar?

Is there anything of interest about the nationality of this writer and the time in which he was writing?

Extract 2: Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Talents* (1998)

This novel was first published in 1998 and was the follow up to Butler's 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower*. It is a story of survival in a disintegrating society and explores difficult questions about race, gender, identity and power as a group of survivors try to forge a hopeful collective future from the ruins of civilisation in a dystopian United States.

'2032

From EARTHSEED: THE BOOKS OF THE LIVING

We give our dead
To the orchards
And the groves.
We give our dead
To life.

1.

From EARTHSEED: THE BOOKS OF THE LIVING

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

Darkness
Gives shape to the light
As light
Shapes the darkness.
Death
Gives shape to life
As life
Shapes death.
The universe
And God
Share this wholeness,
Each
Defining the other.
God
Gives shape to the universe
As the universe
Shapes God
FROM Memories of Other Worlds
BY TAYLOR FRANKLIN BANKOLE

I have read that the period of upheaval that journalists have begun to refer to as ‘the Apocalypse’ or more commonly, more bitterly, ‘the Pox’ lasted from 2015 through 2030 – a decade and a half of chaos. This is untrue. The Pox has been a much longer torment. It began well before 2015, perhaps even before the turn of the millennium. It has not ended.

I have also read that the Pox was caused accidentally coinciding climatic, economic, and sociological crises. It would be more honest to say that the Pox was caused by our own refusal to deal with the obvious problems in those areas. We caused the problems: then we sat and watched as they grew into crises. I have heard people deny this, but I was born in 1970. I have seen enough to know that it is true. I have watched education become more of a privilege of the rich than the basic necessity that it must be if civilised society is to survive. I have watched as convenience, profit, and inertia excused greater and more dangerous environmental degradation. I have watched poverty, hunger, and disease become inevitable for more and more people.

Overall, the Pox has had the effect of an instalment-plan World War III. In fact, there were several small, bloody shooting wars going on around the world during the Pox. These were stupid affairs – wastes of life and treasure. They were fought, ostensibly, to defend against vicious foreign enemies. All too often, they were actually fought because inadequate leaders did not know what else to do. Such leaders knew that they could depend on fear, suspicion, hatred, need, and greed to arouse patriotic support for war.

Amid all this, somehow, the United States of America suffered a major non-military defeat. It lost no important war, yet it did not survive the Pox. Perhaps it simply lost sight of what it once intended to be, then blundered aimlessly until it exhausted itself.

What is left of it now, what it has become, I do not know.

*

Taylor Franklin Bankole was my father. From his writings, he seems to have been a thoughtful, somewhat formal man who wound up with my strange, stubborn mother even though she was almost young enough to be his granddaughter.

My mother seems to have loved him, seems to have been happy with him. He and my mother met during the Pox when they were both homeless wanderers. But he was a 57-year old doctor – a family practice physician – and she

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

was an 18-year old girl. The Pox gave them terrible memories in common. Both had seen their neighbourhoods destroyed – his in San Diego and hers in Robledo, a suburb of Los Angeles. That seems to have been enough for them. In 2027, they met, liked each other, and got married. I think, reading between the lines of some of my father’s writing, that he wanted to take care of this strange young girl that he had found. He wanted to keep her safe from the chaos of the time, safe from the gangs, drugs, slavery, and disease. And of course he was flattered that she wanted him. He was human, and no doubt tired of being alone. His first wife had been dead for about two years when they met.

He couldn’t keep my mother safe, of course. No one could have done that. She had chosen her path long before they met. His mistake was in seeing her as a young girl. She was already a missile, armed and targeted.

Questions: What do you learn about the narrator here?

What do you learn about the narrator’s world?

Near the end of the extract, the narrator describes the relationship between her parents. What do you learn, and what might this suggest about the dystopian world? Is there a place for love in it, or is their relationship merely pragmatic?

This novel was published in 1998. Research some of the news stories and concerns in society at the time. Can you find any evidence of them here? Consider fears about technology and the millennium bug as well as an increasing awareness of climate change. Find out about Christian fundamentalism in America and the survivalist movement.

Extension wider reading:

Visit your local library and seek out one of these texts to read.

H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*

Philip K Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Octavia Butler, *Bloodchild and Other Stories*

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

John Lanchester, *The Wall*

Leni Zumas, *Red Clocks*

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

Gothic Literature:

Film background: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzzf-0ubL7g> This is a trailer which puts together a number of different Gothic elements from film history. **Caution: some disturbing scenes**

The Others, 2001: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7pKqaPtMiA>

The Woman in Black, 2012: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnY0fEV30Wk>

Reading task - Extract from: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer. A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity – but that would be asking too much of fate! Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it. Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted? John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage. John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures. John is a physician, and perhaps – (I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind) – perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster. 3 You see he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency – what is one to do? My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing. So I take phosphates or phosphites – whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again. Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. But what is one to do? I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal – having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition. I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus – but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad. So I will let it alone and talk about the house. The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people. There is a delicious garden! I never saw such a garden – large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them. There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now. There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years. That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care – there is something strange about the house – I can feel it. I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a draught, and shut the window. I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition. But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself – before him, at least, and that makes me very tired. I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it. He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another. He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction. I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more. He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. 'Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear,' said he, 'and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time.' So we took the nursery at the top of the house. It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was a nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls. The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off – the paper – in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin. It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide – plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions. The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others. No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long. There comes John, and I must put this away, – he hates to have me write a word.

Questions about the extract of Gothic fiction: What do you learn about the narrator and her situation here?

What do you learn about the setting?

Who are the other characters the narrator mentions, and how would you describe their relationship?

Make some predictions for what will happen next in this short story.

Extension task of wider reading of Gothic fiction – approach some of these texts with caution!

Visit your local library and see what you can find!

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Jekyll and Hyde*

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*

Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*

Susan Hill, *The Woman in Black*

Iain Banks, *The Wasp Factory*

Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*

Woman in Literature

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

Students should read To the Lighthouse and explore Woolf's presentation of Mrs Ramsay. Students should read the novel and write an essay, max 1000 words, on how Woolf presents motherhood and memory in To the Lighthouse. It's a short novel and students can start their analysis with this extract. Students can write this as if responding to the nineteenth century novel GCSE mark scheme.

"And even if it isn't fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay, raising her eyes to glance at William Bankes and Lily Briscoe as they passed, "it will be another day. And now," she said, thinking that Lily's charm was her Chinese eyes, aslant in her white, puckered little face, but it would take a clever man to see it, "and now stand up, and let me measure your leg," for they might go to the Lighthouse after all, and she must see if the stocking did not need to be an inch or two longer in the leg.

Smiling, for it was an admirable idea, that had flashed upon her this very second--William and Lily should marry--she took the heather-mixture stocking, with its criss-cross of steel needles at the mouth of it, and measured it against James's leg.

"My dear, stand still," she said, for in his jealousy, not liking to serve as measuring block for the Lighthouse keeper's little boy, James fidgeted purposely; and if he did that, how could she see, was it too long, was it too short? she asked.

She looked up--what demon possessed him, her youngest, her cherished?--and saw the room, saw the chairs, thought them fearfully shabby. Their entrails, as Andrew said the other day, were all over the floor; but then what was the point, she asked, of buying good chairs to let them spoil up here all through the winter when the house, with only one old woman to see to it, positively dripped with wet? Never mind, the rent was precisely twopence half-penny; the children loved it; it did her husband good to be three thousand, or if she must be accurate, three hundred miles from his libraries and his lectures and his disciples; and there was room for visitors. Mats, camp beds, crazy ghosts of chairs and tables whose London life of service was done--they did well enough here; and a photograph or two, and books. Books, she thought, grew of themselves. She never had time to read them. Alas! even the books that had been given her and inscribed by the hand of the poet himself: "For her whose wishes must be obeyed" ... "The happier Helen of our days" ... disgraceful to say, she had never read them. And Croom on the Mind and Bates on the Savage Customs of Polynesia ("My dear, stand still," she said)--neither of those could one send to the Lighthouse. At a certain moment, she supposed, the house would become so shabby that something must be done. If they could be taught to wipe their feet and not bring the beach in with them--that would be something. Crabs, she had to allow, if Andrew really wished to

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024

dissect them, or if Jasper believed that one could make soup from seaweed, one could not prevent it; or Rose's objects--shells, reeds, stones; for they were gifted, her children, but all in quite different ways. And the result of it was, she sighed, taking in the whole room from floor to ceiling, as she held the stocking against James's leg, that things got shabbier and got shabbier summer after summer. The mat was fading; the wall-paper was flapping. You couldn't tell any more that those were roses on it. Still, if every door in a house is left perpetually open, and no lockmaker in the whole of Scotland can mend a bolt, things must spoil. What was the use of flinging a green Cashmere shawl over the edge of a picture frame? In two weeks it would be the colour of pea soup. But it was the doors that annoyed her; every door was left open. She listened. The drawing-room door was open; the hall door was open; it sounded as if the bedroom doors were open; and certainly the window on the landing was open, for that she had opened herself. That windows should be open, and doors shut--simple as it was, could none of them remember it? She would go into the maids' bedrooms at night and find them sealed like ovens, except for Marie's, the Swiss girl, who would rather go without a bath than without fresh air, but then at home, she had said, "the mountains are so beautiful." She had said that last night looking out of the window with tears in her eyes. "The mountains are so beautiful." Her father was dying there, Mrs. Ramsay knew. He was leaving them fatherless. Scolding and demonstrating (how to make a bed, how to open a window, with hands that shut and spread like a Frenchwoman's) all had folded itself quietly about her, when the girl spoke, as, after a flight through the sunshine the wings of a bird fold themselves quietly and the blue of its plumage changes from bright steel to soft purple. She had stood there silent for there was nothing to be said. He had cancer of the throat. At the recollection--how she had stood there, how the girl had said, "At home the mountains are so beautiful," and there was no hope, no hope whatever, she had a spasm of irritation, and speaking sharply, said to James:

"Stand still. Don't be tiresome," so that he knew instantly that her severity was real, and straightened his leg and she measured it.

- How does Woolf present Mrs Ramsay in the extract above?
 - How does Woolf present motherhood and memory in the novel as a whole?
- (30)

Required Stationery and Equipment for

Pens, plenty of A4 paper, four A3 folders

Essential Resources

Pens, paper, folders to organise your written notes throughout the year.

Things to Consider Throughout the Year

Deadline for Task: First lesson in the week commencing 16th September 2024