



Our records show that you have indicated a wish to study English Literature at Queen Mary's from September 2015. In anticipation that you will achieve the necessary grades at GCSE and that your place will be confirmed in August by the Headmaster, I write to welcome you to the English Department.

Our aim is to encourage a love of reading within all students at the school, but especially within those studying Literature at a higher level. Many past students have gone on to study the subject at universities across the country, including Oxford and Cambridge, and we regularly hear from ex-students about their enjoyment of their A-level course and their continuing passion for reading.

It is a subject that links well with a whole range of university faculties and is regarded as suitably rigorous in its academic challenges as preparation for degree level study. It is also a subject that prepares one for life: reading analytically, writing authoritatively and discussing intelligently are all vital skills for the successful Literature student and will continue to be important in many future careers. Literature students can also gain an understanding of who they are and their place in the world around us through exposure to different cultures, places and times in the reading they will complete.

As with all worthwhile ventures, English Literature will make considerable demands upon your time. There is a great deal of essential reading to be completed for the course and even more wider reading that will enhance understanding and improve potential for success. There will be regular essays set during term-time and, of course there is the internally assessed coursework and the externally-assessed examinations for which you will be preparing throughout the year.

As a Department, we also look to broaden our students' experience of Literature by organising regular theatre visits and study days; by showing film adaptations of great Literature at lunchtimes and after school; and by running an extra-curricular Literature Society which we hope you will join in September.

The English Department has devised the programme of teaching according to the strengths and preferences of the individual teachers within the constraints of the exam board's list of set texts. We believe that across the two years, you will experience a broad range of literary styles and genres, so that there is hopefully something for everyone. **You will be expected to have read the set texts on the attached list by the time you arrive in September.**



You will need to buy a copy of the set texts below to keep as your own. This will allow you to make detailed annotation in the text during individual and class reading, and group discussion, which you will not be able to do in a school copy. It will also give you a sense of ownership of the text – it is our experience that students feel a sentimental attachment to the texts they have used for two years and they are often reluctant to give them up at the end. On a more practical level, some alternative editions are rather lacking in notes, editorial, or critical comments. Those editions specified on the attached sheet are more authoritative versions of the texts you are studying. The school is, of course, willing to assist any student with financial difficulties to purchase texts that are necessary to the course. Please contact the Headmaster if this is the case.

All that is left is to wish you a restorative and relaxing summer after the rigours of GCSE. I look forward to seeing you in September and discussing with you your thoughts upon the reading list included with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M. Lax
(Head of English)



English Literature Set Texts Reading List

I include bibliographic details of recommended reputable and authoritative editions of the set texts. The prices stated are those listed on 'Amazon.co.uk' on 13th July 2015 and exclude postage and packing.

All of the below were available for much less (sometimes as little as a penny!) from second-hand sellers in the 'Amazon Marketplace' on the same date. Please be aware that some sellers do inflate the price of postage and packing in order to cover the very low cost of the book. You may also find second-hand copies much cheaper in local bookshops, charity shops or on other such book selling websites as 'abebooks'.

While it is vastly preferable for you to obtain any edition of the text for reading over the summer, rather than none, **the editions below will be the ones used in class and it is vital that you can follow the page references and glossing to which the teachers will refer.**

Set Texts – Essential reading before September

Twelfth Night: William Shakespeare (New Cambridge Shakespeare updated edition, Cambridge University Press, 1985), ISBN: 052168126X, New Edition price from £8.99 (Older edition but still relevant price £0.01 second-hand exc. p&p)

A Streetcar Named Desire: Tennessee Williams (Penguin, 2009) ISBN: 0141190272, Price: £6.99 (£1.76 second-hand exc. p&p)

The Great Gatsby: F. Scott Fitzgerald (Wordsworth Classics, 1992)
ISBN: 185326041X, Price: £1.99 (£0.01 second-hand + p&p)

The Merchant's Prologue and Tale: Geoffrey Chaucer (Cambridge, 2001)
ISBN: 052178753X, Price: £8.60 (£0.01 second-hand + p&p)

The editions listed above contain good introductions, critical essays and further notes to accompany the texts. The list of texts on the next page may be viewed as desirable wider reading for before and during the course, rather than the essential pre-reading of the set texts above. Please make use of your local lending library.



English Literature Desirable / Suggested Wider Reading List

Remember that many of these texts are now out of copyright and may be freely available in e-text version at www.gutenberg.org.uk amongst others

Twelfth Night:

Much Ado About Nothing: William Shakespeare
A Midsummer Night's Dream: William Shakespeare
As You Like It: William Shakespeare
The Taming of the Shrew: William Shakespeare
Lady Windermere's Fan: Oscar Wilde
The Rivals: Richard Brinsley Sheridan
She Stoops To Conquer: Oliver Goldsmith
The Way of the World: William Congreve
The Misanthrope: Moliere
The Importance of Being Earnest: Oscar Wilde
The History Boys: Alan Bennett

A Streetcar Named Desire:

Glass Menagerie: Tennessee Williams
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof: Tennessee Williams
Long Day's Journey Into Night: Eugene O'Neill
Death of a Salesman: Arthur Miller
The Crucible: Arthur Miller
A View From the Bridge: Arthur Miller

The Great Gatsby:

Short Cuts: Raymond Carver
A Good Man is Hard to Find: Flannery O'Connor
Catcher in the Rye: J.D. Salinger
Tender is the Night: F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Last of the Mohicans: J. Fennimore Cooper
The Grapes of Wrath: John Steinbeck

The Merchant's Prologue and Tale:

The Canterbury Tales: Geoffrey Chaucer

Any historical background reading would also be useful to gain an insight into the mind of the author and the set texts. Understanding and enjoyment of *The Great Gatsby* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* is largely dependent upon a knowledge of American society in the first half of the 20th century; while the politics, society and theatrical conventions of Elizabethan England greatly influenced much of Shakespeare's writing, as well as his classical predecessors in the Comedy genre. Likewise, we must be aware of the social context for *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer. Theatre, film, television and radio performances and adaptations of any of the texts would be beneficial and worthy of discussion at a later stage.