Transition to Advanced Level
English Language and Literature

Welcome to A Level Language & Literature - you have chosen an excellent A Level!

Why is there such a gap between GCSEs and A-levels? Well, A-levels are – as their name suggests – advanced qualifications, and so require much more of you as the student. They require you to gain a deeper understanding of the texts that you study. There is a lot more independent work required like reading about the author's life and how this may have influenced the text; reading texts that are not on the examination syllabus in order to gain a deeper understanding of the context or writer's that may have influenced the writing of the fiction and non-fiction texts that you are studying.

Dr Ellerby, head of history at Dorset's Parkstone grammar, says: *"GCSE is often highly structured with very specific requirements for homework, whereas at A- level there is a greater expectation for taking the initiative in going beyond the set reading and utilising the library to read around and consolidate."* Roughly speaking, for GCSE exams you can just learn the content. At A-level you actually need to **understand** it.

The internet is a great source for reading other people's interpretations of text – use these to formulate your own response – remember the beauty of analysis is that there is never a right or wrong answer as long as you can justify your point of view!

Get into the habit of using your time effectively, and organise yourself so you know when you have deadlines and when you're going to do your work, then A-levels will seem much easier and less of a jump than expected. Particularly during the pressure points when you have non-examined assessment or exams, being organised and motivated from the start will ensure that you're really prepared, and not too stressed.

At any point during A-levels, if you're finding it hard, or are struggling with the workload, then it's always worth seeking advice and support. Your form tutor, subject teachers, and head of sixth form are a good place to start, and the earlier you talk to someone about any difficulties that you're having, the sooner they can be resolved.

Reading List

Lessons will not be used to read the text; you will be expected to come to lessons with a good knowledge of the plot, main themes and characters.

Over the summer, you are required to read the following texts that will be studied during the course. Buying your own copies is essential in order to make and keep annotations and highlights:

- Play: 'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams, Penguin Modern Classics (ISBN: 0141190272)
- Novel: 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Penguin Modern Classics (ISBN: 0141182636)
- Play: 'A Raisin in the Sun' by Lorraine Hansberry, Methuen Modern Plays (ISBN: 0413762408)
- Coursework text: 'All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes' by Maya Angelou, Virago (ISBN: 1844085058)

Starting in September

In your first lesson you will be given a course booklet with a wide range of information about the course and how you will be assessed. You will also undertake a series of activities to help you start understanding the aspects of literature covered throughout the year.

We hope your transition lessons have been enjoyable. We also hope that you enjoy your summer reading and look forward to hearing and seeing your responses in September.

Transition Tasks

To get you engaged with your reading and to give your new teachers an idea of your approach to the subject, you are expected to bring your response to the following tasks to your first lesson in September. **This is a compulsory task** from which we will make our first assessment as teachers.

Please complete the following tasks, answering the questions as fully as you can:

TASK ONE

Paper 1 Voices in Speech and Writing
In this unit you will focus on the 'voice' of a writer or speaker.

Please read the following interview from <u>1936</u> with F. Scott Fitzgerald. He wrote 'The Great Gatsby' which we will read in your first term.

Great interviews:
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/sep/18/classics.fscottfitzgerald

<u>Answer the following questions:</u>
In this interview there are 3 voices: the interviewer, Michel Mok; F. Scott Fitzgerald; and Fitzgerald's private nurse who is caring for him after his accident.
1. What is Mok's attitude to Fitzgerald? How do you know? What methods does he use to convey his attitude?
2. What sort of 'voice' does Fitzgerald have? Choose 3 adjectives to describe how he is presented in the text. How is this 'voice' conveyed to us? What methods does Mok use to create the persona of Fitzgerald?
3. What is the nurse's attitude to Fitzgerald? What methods does Mok use to convey the nurse's attitude?

TASK TWO

Paper 1 Voices in Speech and Writing

In this unit you will focus on the 'voice' of a writer or speaker, exploring how writers craft language for the spoken voice.

Please listen to the following speech, originally delivered by Colonel Tim Collins to his regiment on the eve of battle on 19th March 2003, before crossing the Iraq border. This version has been dramatised by Kenneth Branagh.

Tim Collins' Eve-of-Battle speech:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpdeNcH1H8A

Answer the following questions:
1. Before watching, what rhetorical devices do you expect to hear in an inspirational speech?
2. As you listen, what do you notice about his use of pronouns and emotive language?
3. Do you notice how he uses a semantic field (distinctive groups of words linked by meaning & association) of religion? What effect does he intend it to have on his regiment?
4. When studying spoken language, we consider how prosodic features, such intonation, stress, rhythm, pause, contribute to successful communication. To what effect does Tim Collins use prosodic features in his speech?

Paper 2 Varieties in Language and Literature

Read the following extract from the opening stage directions of 'A Raisin in the Sun' by Lorraine Hansberry.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

The YOUNGER living room would be a comfortable and well-ordered room if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being. Its furnishings are typical and undistinguished and their primary feature now is that they have clearly had to accommodate the living of too many people for too many years and they are tired. Still, we can see that at some time, a time probably no longer remembered by the family {except perhaps for MAMA), the furnishings of this room were actually selected with care and love and even hope and brought to this apartment and arranged with taste and pride.

That was a long time ago. Now the once loved pattern of the couch upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers which have themselves finally come to be more important than the upholstery. And here a table or a chair has been moved to disguise the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing uniformity, elsewhere on its surface.

Weariness has, in fact, won in this room. Everything has been polished, washed, sat on, used, scrubbed too often. All pretenses but living itself have long since vanished from the very atmosphere of this room.

Moreover, a section of this room, for it is not really a room unto itself, though the landlord's lease would make it seem so, slopes backward to provide a small kitchen area, where the family prepares the meals that are eaten in the living room proper, which must also serve as dining room. The single window that has been provided for these "two" rooms is located in this kitchen area. The sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day is only that which fights its way through this little window.

At left, a door leads to a bedroom which is shared by MAMA and her daughter, BENEATHA. At right, opposite, is a second room (which in the beginning of the life of this apartment was probably a breakfast room) which serves as a bedroom for WALTER and his wife, RUTH.

Time: Sometime between World War II and the present.
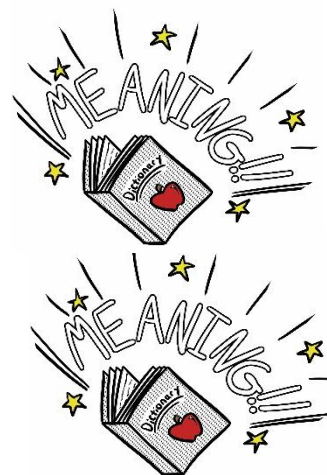
Place: Chicago's Southside.

At Rise: It is morning dark in the living room. TRAVIS is asleep on the make-down bed at center. An alarm clock sounds from within the bedroom at right, and presently RUTH enters from that room and closes the door behind her. She crosses sleepily toward the window. As she passes her sleeping son she reaches down and shakes him a little. At the window she raises the shade and a dusky Southside morning light comes in feebly. She fills a pot with water and puts it on to boil. She calls to the boy, between yawns, in a slightly muffled voice.

How does Hansberry use the stage directions to show the effects of inequality on her characters?

1. What props does she use to illustrate poverty?
2. What is important about the way the living room has been divided up? What does it say about the lives of the Youngers?
3. What is the significance of the 'crocheted doilies'?
4. What is the symbolic significance of the 'make-down bed' used by Travis?
5. What are the connotations of the descriptions of the light in the room?
6. Who is the primary audience for the stage directions?
7. How does Hansberry deviate from the conventions of stage directions?

TASK FOUR

1. Glossary and activities which will help you become familiar with new terminology, key for the course.

Lexis and Semantics:

- **Denotative and connotational meanings:** the literal (denotative) and associated (connotational) meanings of words and phrases.
- **Figurative language:** language used in a non-literal way to describe something in another's terms (e.g. simile or metaphor).
- **Semantic fields:** groups of words connected by a common meaning.
- **Synonyms:** words that have equivalent meanings.
- **Antonyms:** words that have contrasting meanings.
- **Hypernyms:** words whose meanings contain other words, (e.g. *animal* contains *dog*, *cat* and *fish*).
- **Hyponyms:** words that can be included in a larger, more general category (e.g. the hyponyms *car*, *bus*, *aeroplane* as a form of the hypernym *transport*).
- **Levels of formality:** vocabulary styles including slang, colloquial, taboo and formal.
- **Jargon:** a technical vocabulary associated with a particular occupation or activity.
- **Sociolect:** a language style associated with a particular social group.
- **Dialect:** a language style associated with a particular geographical region.
- **Neology:** the process of new word formation, including the following: blends, compounds, acronyms, initialisms, eponyms.

ACTIVITY

i) List three colours and their connotational meanings.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ii) Can you give 3 examples of antonyms to the word 'kind'?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

iii) What neologisms can you think of from popular culture?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Grammar:

- **Phrase**: a group of words centred around a head word.
- **Head word**: the central word in a phrase which gives the phrase its name (e.g. noun phrase, adjective phrase) and may be modified by other words.
- **Modification**: the adding of additional words to provide more detail to a head word in a phrase either before it (pre-modification) or after it (post-modification).
- **Clause**: a group of words centred around a verb, which may be either grammatically complete (main clause) or incomplete (subordinate clause).
- **Active voice**: a clause where the agent (doer) of an action is the subject.
- **Passive voice**: a clause where the patient (the entity affected by an action) is in the subject position, and the agent either follows or is left out.
- **Tense**: how the time of an event is marked (usually through verb inflection): past, present and future.
- **Coordination**: the joining of two or more independent clauses via co-ordinating conjunctions. Single words and longer phrases can also be co-ordinated.
- **Subordination**: the joining of two or more clauses where only one is independent (the main clause) and the others dependent (subordinate clause/clauses).
- **Sentence**: a larger unit of meaning, which may be formed of a single clause (simple sentence) or several clauses (compound or complex sentences).
- **Sentence function**: the purpose a sentence fulfils in communication: as a statement, question, command or exclamation. These are also referred to in many grammar books as (respectively): declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives.
- **Word class**: the grammatical category into which words can be placed, including noun, adjective, verb, adverb, determiner, pronoun, preposition, conjunction.

ACTIVITY

i)   Write a sentence which has a main and a subordinate clause, below:

_____
_____
_____

ii)   Considering sentence function, give an example of the following:

Interrogative: _____

Declarative: _____

Imperative: _____

iii) Give an example of each of the following:

Pronoun: _____

Preposition: _____

Conjunction: _____

- **Audience**: the receivers or intended receivers of a text (written, spoken, multimodal). The concept of an *ideal audience/reader* is often found in critical discourse. Texts might also have multiple audiences.

- **Discourses**: used in many different (and sometime contradictory) ways in language study. Can be used to refer to a mode of language (e.g. spoken or written discourse), a register (e.g. medical or legal discourse), a way of thinking about and presenting something (e.g. representing language using a discourse of decay).

- **Foregrounding**: the way in which texts emphasise key events or ideas through the use of attention-seeking devices (in terms of lexis, semantics, phonology or grammar) that either repeat content (*parallelism*) or break established patterns (*deviation)*. Deviation may be:

    - *external*: breaking from the normal conventions of language use, for example in the use of nonsense words or ungrammatical constructions
    - *internal*: breaking from a pattern that has previously been set up in the text for a striking effect.

- **Genre**: the way of categorising and classifying different types of texts according to their features or expected shared conventions. Genres come into being as the result of people agreeing about perceived similar characteristics in terms of content or style. Genres are fluid and dynamic and new genres continually evolve as a result of new technologies and cultural practices.

- **Mode**: the way in which language is communicated between text producer and text receiver and the physical channel through which this is carried out. At its simplest, this could be spoken or written (*visual* or *auditory* channel). Mode also encompasses ideas around planning and spontaneity, distance between text producer and receiver, how transitory or long-lasting a text is. Mode is more than a binary opposition, is sometimes visualised as a continuum and is constantly changing as new communication technologies blur the lines between older forms.

- **Narrative**: a type of text or discourse that functions to tell a series of events. A narrative is the organisation of experience told by a *narrator* to any number of *narratees*. A narrative has two distinctive parts:

    - *the story*: the events, places, characters and time of action that act as the building blocks of the narrative
    - *the narrative discourse*: the particular shaping of those building blocks into something worth telling through specific choices in language and structure.

Finally

If you have any questions between now and September about AS English Literature at HWS, email Miss Ford (Head of English) at efo@hws.haringey.sch.uk or Ms Maree (KS5 Co-ordinator for English) at cma@hws.haringey.sch.uk.