English Literature

This bridging work MUST be completed by the time you start your course and will be assessed during the first weeks of term. The aims are for you to be ready to start learning at post-16 level.

# What do you do in your first year?

In the first year, you will begin studying most of your set texts. Up until Christmas you will focus on two novels: Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’ and ‘Dracula’ by Bram Stoker. You will simultaneously begin studying the first 12 poems from your contemporary poetry anthology, ‘Poems of the Decade’. After Christmas you will study the first of your drama texts, ‘A Streetcar named Desire’ by Tennessee Williams before looking at Shakespeare’s ‘Othello’. Once you have completed your April progression exam on your two novels, you will finish the year embarking on your coursework.

# Summer Bridging Work—THREE ESSENTIAL TASKS

1. **Read and annotate the context article below:**

<https://www.britishlibrary.cn/en/articles/daughters-decadence-new-woman-victorian-fin-de-siecle/>

1. **Read the extract below from Bram Stoker’s ‘Dracula’. Explore how fear and suspense are created in the extract in a close analytical reading of 750-1000 words. As part of your analysis, try to make some connections between the portrayal of the women and the Victorian context you have read about.**

*Extract from Dracula by Bram Stoker*

*In the novel, Jonathan Harker travels to Transylvania to help Count Dracula acquire housing properties in London. He soon discovers that his is imprisoned in Dracula’s castle and desperately hopes for a way to escape. One evening upon realising that Dracula has left the castle, he explores different rooms until he suddenly feels very drowsy and falls into a semi-conscious state.*

In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner. I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them, they threw no shadow on the floor. They came close to me, and looked at me for some time, and then whispered together. Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to be almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where. All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet \*Mina’s eyes and cause her pain, but it is the truth. They whispered together, and then they all three laughed, such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. It was like the intolerable, tingling sweetness of waterglasses when played on by a cunning hand. The fair girl shook her head coquettishly, and the other two urged her on.

One said, ‘Go on! You are first, and we shall follow. Yours is the right to begin.’

The other added, ‘He is young and strong. There are kisses for us all.’

I lay quiet, looking out from under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation. The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet, and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood. I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and I could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one’s flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer, nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited, waited with beating heart.

*\*Mina is Jonathan’s fiancée.*

1. **Read both prose novels (‘Dracula’ and ‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’) as there is insufficient time to read these once you have started the course.**

# Bridging Work—RECOMMENDED

As well as the reading suggested above, it is recommended that you read ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’, which is the other core text on the course, and other plays by Tennessee Williams (‘Cat on a Hot Tin Roof’ and ‘The Glass Menagerie’). We also recommend that you read other gothic novels (‘The Castle of Otranto’, ‘The Monk’, ‘Frankenstein’, ‘The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde’, etc.). It would be equally beneficial to do some wider reading of Wilde’s work (‘The Importance of Being Earnest’, ‘An Ideal Husband’ and ‘The Decay of Lying’).

For students aiming for higher grades or considering English Literature for University, we would advise further critical reading on the core texts and further research into context.

# Required Resources

You will be required to obtain your own copies of the key texts (‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’, ‘Dracula’, ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’) to annotate and use for extra revision at home. It is your responsibility to bring the required texts to every lesson. We recommend that you buy the following editions:

**Dracula:** Oxford World Classics

**The Picture of Dorian Gray:** Oxford World Classics

**A Streetcar Named Desire:** Heinemann





