

Literature Syllabus & Summer Reading – BFI 1^{ère}

Books to purchase for next year (for the moment):

Written Exam Syllabus – 3 set texts, including the following :

- Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* - please get hold of the 'NCS - The New Cambridge Shakespeare' edition
- *The Return of the Soldier*, a 1918 novella by Rebecca West - Virago Modern Classics

Oral Exam Syllabus – Dystopian Writing : 6 poems + 2 other set texts

- *The Handmaid's Tale*, a novel by Margaret Atwood – Vintage Edition

TASK 1 – Reading

Over the summer break, you are required to read some of our set texts :

→ *The Return of the Soldier* / *The Handmaid's Tale* / Act 1 of *Hamlet*

TASK 2 - Personal Response to the texts : Note-taking guidelines

Maintain a reading log for both *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

A. For *The Return of the Soldier*, organise your notes around :

- **Themes and Motifs:** List some themes. Note *how* the author explores them. Look for recurring motifs: images, phrases, symbols that appear repeatedly & signal a deeper meaning.
- **Characterization and Relationships:** Track the development of major and minor characters. How are they introduced? What are their motivations? How do their relationships shift? What do these dynamics reveal about the text's wider messages?
- **Setting and Atmosphere:** Consider how the physical, social, or historical setting functions. Is the setting mirroring a character's internal state, or is it acting almost as a character itself?

Analytical note-taking methods

- **Double- entry Journal:** Divide your page into two columns. On the left, write down a significant quote or plot point. On the right, write your analysis, questions, and connections to themes.
- **Character tracking Logs:** Focus on each major character. Note key quotes about them, their flaws, their turning points, and how other characters perceive them.
- **For each of the 6 chapters of the novella:** Note brief summaries (no more than three sentences), then note some literary devices used & the central conflicts introduced.

Gather some QUOTES: Note 10 to 15 significant quotes.

- Find some quotes that are rich in literary technique (imagery, syntax, tone, literary devices) or perfectly encapsulate a major theme.
- Write these out fully and highlight key words you would want to micro-analyse in class.

Initial Impressions & reactions

A-level assessment requires you to engage with the text & shape your own critical voice.

- **Your critical voice:** Write down your genuine reactions. Where did the text surprise, unsettle, or confuse you? If a character's action felt jarring, write down why.

B. For *The Handmaid's Tale*

- Note your initial **impressions and reactions**.
- Keep in mind the 8 key issues, and **find 5 strong quotes in the text to illustrate each**.

Dystopian Writing – 8 Key Issues :

1. *Power and Control in Dystopian Writing*
2. *The use and effects of Setting in Dystopian Writing*
3. *Violence and Threat in Dystopian Writing*
4. *The Portrayal of Hopes and Dreams in Dystopian Writing*
5. *Rebellion and Resistance in Dystopian Writing*
6. *Love and Relationships as depicted in Dystopian Writing*
7. *Resilience and Survival in Dystopian Writing*
8. *Alienation and Isolation in Dystopian Writing*