



Making the Leap!

moving from GCSE to
A Level Literature study



EMC

Publications

An English and Media Centre Student Resource

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What This Pack Is and How to Use It

Are you thinking about studying English Literature at A Level? The activities in this unit will help you start to make the move from being a great GCSE student of Literature to being a great student at A Level – and beyond.

Some of the activities ask you to step back and think about what it means to study literature, while others encourage you to try out some different ways of approaching your learning – whether that's reading, discussing, writing or learning how to reflect on your own work.

Some of the activities are short, others might take a couple of sessions to complete, others, such as reading an award-winning novel, are longer projects which you might keep going over several weeks. Begin by simply picking those which appeal to you most, but between now and the start of your A Level course try to complete a selection of differently coloured activities from the 'Making the Leap' bingo card on page 6. That way you will be practising and developing a good range of the skills an English Literature student needs. (And do spend five or 10 minutes simply flicking through the whole collection of ideas, even those you don't think you'll attempt. Even this will give you a really good sense of the wide range of approaches to Literature you'll have chance to explore during your A Levels.)

A Key to the 'Making the Leap' Bingo Card

Yellow: Reading, watching and listening to the experts

Red: Creating your own anthologies

Turquoise: Critical challenges

Green: Reading, watching and listening to texts

Pink: Critical and creative ways of exploring Literature

The activities make use of a wide variety of freely available online resources, either on the EMC website or via sites such as the National Theatre, the *Guardian* and other newspapers, YouTube, university websites, the Poetry Foundation. We've checked the links but if you find one that is not working or which requires you to take out a paid subscription, please email web@englishandmedia.co.uk and we'll find an alternative for you. (If the hyperlinks don't work for you, copy and paste the web address into your browser.)

Many of the activities can be completed on your own, but some will be more fun and more productive if you can join up with others who are also thinking of studying literature. For these activities your teacher will be able to advise you about setting up a virtual discussion using platforms recommended and validated by your school.

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| 14. Dive into the world of short stories, listen to interview and discussion about it <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Investigate what an essay actually is, read some great examples and write one of your own about any subject you want <input type="checkbox"/> | 24. Immerse yourself in a university lecture <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Try exploratory writing <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Write a graphic novel version of one of your GCSE texts. How well can you get across what is most important and distinctive? What gets lost? <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. Put together a short anthology of poems and write the introduction to the collection <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. Listen to literature (audio books) <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Read an <i>emagazine</i> article and select 3 interesting points to share <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Read a prize-winning novel – just for pleasure <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Visit a virtual library – the British Library’s Discovering Literature website <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. Take a risk by sharing an idea you’re not sure about <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Let a poem brew over time <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Collate a taster anthology of your favourite books to tempt another reader into giving them a try <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Watch a play online and write the script for a podcast/online discussion reviewing it <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Watch a film or TV adaptation of a novel you know. Then write a pitch for a novel you think would make a great film adaptation. Explain why! <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Listen to a literature podcast and share what you found interesting with a classmate/your teacher <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Play with a text, messing about and transforming it in 2 or 3 different ways. What do you learn about the original? <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Experts in the spotlight – watch a selection of emagClips <input type="checkbox"/> | 21. Take part in a ‘Critics’ Conference’ role play <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. Create a ‘Five Books’ list and publish your list <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Read the opening pages of 2 or 3 books about literature and explain which you’d most like to go on to read <input type="checkbox"/> | 23. Explore the art of the review – read 3 or 4 online reviews for a novel you enjoyed, then either write your own or write a response to one of them <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Write a poem in response to a poem <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Take a risk with your reading and read a novel outside your comfort zone and write or record a review <input type="checkbox"/> |

1. Let a Poem Brew Over Time

- Choose a poem. You could choose one from your exam anthology or (and this would be both more fun and more useful for you as a student of Literature) browse the websites listed below.

Online poetry libraries

Poetry Foundation

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

The Saturday Poem

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/saturdaypoem>

National Poetry Library

<https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/online-poetry/poems>

Poem Hunter

<https://www.poemhunter.com/>

Poetry by Heart anthology

<https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/anthology/>

Scottish Poetry Library

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/>

Library of Congress Archive

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/archive-of-recorded-poetry-and-literature/about-this-collection/>

<https://poets.org/>

<https://poets.org/>

- Use the platform recommended and validated by your school to swap poems.

Set a timer for 10 seconds.

- Do a 'snapshot' look at the poem for 10 seconds – don't try to read it – and jot down anything you notice about it.
- Do the same again but this time for 30 seconds.
- Now put the poem to one side.
- On three different days over the next week or so, spend about 10 minutes reading the poem and writing about it in any way you want. You might write about what you like or what you are puzzled by or you might just ask questions. It's up to you whether you read over what you wrote on the previous occasion – there are advantages to both ways. Over the course of the next few weeks you could try the activity both ways.
- On the last day, read the poem again, read over all your writing, then make a few notes or record a voice message exploring how your response to the poem changed and developed.

Sharing what you notice

- If possible, use the platform recommended and validated by your school to join up with your partner. Together talk both about the poems and your thoughts on how your response to the poem changed and developed over time.

2. Explore *emagazine*

emagazine is a magazine and website for A Level students with articles written by academics, critics, writers, teachers and students on texts and topics set for A Level – and on literature and language more generally.

If your school has a subscription and you are able to get the logins from your teacher, log in and spend some time browsing the site, dipping into articles, then choose one that interests you. (It doesn't even have to be on a text you have read.)

For those of you who are not able to get hold of the logins or whose school doesn't have a subscription, we've collected together a small selection of articles for you to browse and choose from. A few are on authors or texts you may have come across at GCSE, a few are more general and a few explore books you may want to read just for pleasure. (See the '*emagazine* Resource Pack' accompanying this download.)

If you are able to use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share ideas, then the activity will be most interesting and productive. If you can't just do it on your own.

- Dip into the openings of several articles and choose the one that most immediately grabs your attention.
- Read the article and pick out three points to share. These could be ideas you find interesting, that you want to question (perhaps because you disagree, perhaps because you want to find out more), a point you don't understand.
- Take one of the points and add your own ideas to it or write a new point of your own.
- Use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share your ideas on what you noticed about the way the article is written – its organisation and development, the style, the voice and what difference that made both to your enjoyment and understanding.
- At some point before you begin your A Level course, why not have a go at writing an *emag*-style article yourself? You could join up with a friend and arrange to be editors for each other, adding the title, standfirst (the little overview that introduces the article) and sub-heads. You could write about one of your GCSE set texts – or you could choose something completely different: a novel you've enjoyed, one of the poems or short stories you've come across in this pack, a broader literary topic.

1. Adapting Literature for Film
2. Crossover Fiction
3. Openings in Contemporary Fiction – Questions, Challenges and Surprises
4. Dickens and Realism
5. Comedy in Shakespeare's Tragedies
6. William Blake: The Tyger
7. William Wordsworth: A Poet of the Ordinary
8. Michael Rosen: Defining Poetry
9. Bloodlust, Savagery, Obsession and Excess – Gothic *Macbeth*
10. Navigating Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde's London
11. Structures of Innocence – Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*
12. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* – A Question of Trust (don't read this article until you have read the novel – it's a quick and enjoyable read, so if you haven't, give it a go).

3. Books on TV

- Watch (or think back to) a film or TV adaptation of a novel you know, for example *Northern Lights*, *Noughts and Crosses*, *Emma*, *David Copperfield*, *Sherlock Holmes*, Agatha Christie.
(See BBC iPlayer for freely available dramas; Netflix and Amazon Prime have a wide selection if you have a subscription. Some complete dramas are also available on YouTube)
- Read Jenny Grahame's article for *MediaMagazine* about the recent adaptation of *David Copperfield* in the 'emagazine Resource Pack'. (Like *emagazine*, *MediaMagazine* is a magazine for A Level students – but for those studying Media or Film.)
- Write your own review of the adaptation you have watched.

Your own adaptation

- Now write a pitch for a different novel you think would make a great film or film adaptation. Explain why and how you would approach it.

4. Watch an Online Play

Why not watch a play online?

Here are some of the places you can watch theatre online.

Students working at home are now able to access the [National Theatre's on-demand site](#) for free – please ask your teacher to sign up or send you your school logins.

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/schools/secondary-and-fe/on-demand-in-schools>

[Digital Theatre](#) also offers a wide range of plays to watch on-demand (including from the Royal Shakespeare Company). Although this is a subscription site, some of their plays are available on their YouTube site. They are also currently offering a 30-day free trial.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/digitaltheatre>

<https://www.digitaltheatre.com/consumer/productions>

[Shakespeare's Globe](#) also has a wide range of plays which can be rented or bought at

<https://globeplayer.tv/all>

A Shakespeare play

- Choose a Shakespeare play you have never studied before.
- Watch the play online. (If you can arrange to watch the same play at the same time as one of your classmates, have an interval break in the middle, so that you can chat about it.)
- Record a 2-minute review of it to send to your teacher.

(Watch a second play if you want to!)

- On a different day, watch the Shakespeare play you studied for GCSE. What difference does it make to the experience of watching it to have already studied it? What difference does watching it make to your understanding?

A play not Shakespeare!

- Enjoy watching the play.
- Write the script for a podcast/online discussion between a critic and the director. (If you have been watching the same play as some of your classmates, hold an 'After Show' discussion. One of you could play the director, one a lead actor and one the interviewer/critic. Use the platform recommended and validated by your school to do this.)

You can see examples of this sort of discussion on the following websites (all are freely accessible):

1. [National Theatre YouTube channel](#)
http://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7citDojiasj-nMABL_DXku
2. [National Theatre podcasts](#)
<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/nt-talks/id486761654?mt=2>
3. [Young Vic](#)
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqth0oZ0oHJJYftVHd2ZHwaKQ_shhRGhf
4. [Shakespeare's Globe](#)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g>
5. [RSC](#)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g>