

SUMMER PREP: A Level English Literature

In order to be well prepared for your A Level English Literature course, you will want to read as much as you can over the summer. We will talk to you about your reading in September and we will expect you to have completed the three tasks outlined below to the best of your ability.

Here are the texts you will read throughout the course

Dracula by Bram Stoker

The Little Stranger Sarah Waters

The Great Gatsby by F.Scott Fitzgerald

A Streetcar Named Desire – Tennessee Williams

Poems of the Decade

Othello – William Shakespeare

TASK 1: Contextual Preparation for American Literature

- **Please read 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' online (approximately 26 pages-you can use the following link: <http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/users/m/morillo/public/fitzgeraldstories1.pdf>)**
- **In your own words, write summary of the story (250-300 words)**
- **Find quotations relating to greed and wealth.** Write them down and try to explain how they relate to the story and/or the effects of greed.
- **Research and explain in your own words the following terms:**
 - Prohibition and its effects in 1920s USA
 - The American Dream
 - The Jazz Age

TASK 2: Close Reading (500-800 words)

Read the following extracts from *Dracula* and *The Little Stranger*

Analyse language. Consider the description of setting and your understanding of gothic conventions.

What comparisons can you make between the 2 texts?

Dracula by Bram Stoker

At one corner of the room was a heavy door. I tried it, for, since I could not find the key of the room or the key of the outer door, which was the main object of my search, I must make further examination, or all my efforts would be in vain. It was open and led through a stone passage to a circular stairway, which went steeply down. I descended, minding carefully where I went, for the stairs were dark, being only lit by loopholes in the heavy masonry. As I went through the passage the smell grew closer and heavier. At last I pulled open a heavy door which stood ajar, and found myself in an old, ruined chapel, which had evidently been used as a graveyard. The roof was broken, and in two places were steps leading to vaults, but the ground had recently been dug over, and the earth placed in great wooden boxes, manifestly those which had been brought by the Slovaks. There was nobody about, and I made search for any further outlet, but there was none. Then I went over every inch of the ground, so as not to lose a chance. I went down even into the vaults, where the dim light struggled, although to do so was a dread to my very soul. Into two of these I went but saw nothing except fragments of old coffins and piles of dust; in the third, however, I made a discovery.

The Little Stranger by Sarah Waters

Now, however, came the most grotesque thing of all. He was still gazing at his own sweating face when, to his disbelief and horror, the shaving-glass gave a sort of shudder. The glass was an old Victorian one, a bevelled circular mirror in a pivoted brass frame, on a porcelain base. It was, as I knew myself, pretty heavy: not a thing that would slip if nudged or shaken by footsteps on the floor around it. Rod stood perfectly still, in that still room, and watched as the shaving-glass shuddered again, then rocked, then began to inch its way across the washing-stand towards him. It was just, he said, as if the glass were walking—or, rather, as if it were in that moment discovering its own ability to walk. It moved with a jerky, halting gait, the unglazed underside of its porcelain base making a frightful, grating sound on the polished marble surface.

What happened next was even worse. All this time Rod had been watching the glass make its shuddering way towards him, sick with horror at what, to me, he kept calling the wrongness of the thing. Part of this wrongness was his sense that the glass was acting somehow impersonally. It had, God knew how, become animate; but he had the feeling that what was animating it was blind, thoughtless motion. He felt that if he were to put his hand flat in the glass's path the porcelain base would find a creeping, dogged way over his fingers. Naturally, he did not put his hand there. If anything, he shrank back. But he could see that the glass was now approaching the edge of the marble stand, and he felt a horrible fascination in watching it teeter and fall. So he kept his place, a yard or so away from it. The glass crept onwards, until an inch and then a second inch of its base was projecting over the marble edge.

He seemed to see the thing groping for another surface; he saw the mirror tilt as, unbalanced, the base rocked forward. He actually started to put out his hand, in an automatic impulse to keep it from tumbling. But as he did it, the glass suddenly seemed to 'gather itself for a spring'—and the next moment it had launched itself at his head. He twisted away, and caught a stinging blow behind his ear. He heard the shattering of the mirror and the porcelain base as the glass struck the floor behind him. He turned, and saw the pieces lying harmlessly on the carpet, as if just knocked there by a clumsy hand.

Task 3: Reading List

Read 2-3 novels from the list below, and complete ONE of the following essay tasks:

Explore the ways in which the writers present life in a certain place and time

OR

Compare the ways in which the writers present hopes and dreams

- *The Colour Purple* - Alice Walker
- *Great Expectations* – Charles Dickens
- *The Catcher in the Rye* - J.D. Salinger
- *The Rotter's Club* – Jonathan Coe
- *A Handmaid's Tale* – Margaret Atwood
- *Death of a Salesman* – Arthur Miller
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – Oscar Wilde
- *The Bell Jar* - Sylvia Plath

Supplementary Texts:

- *The Art of Writing English Literature Essays A Level and Beyond*
- *19th Century American Literature York Notes* - Rowland Hughes
- *20th Century American Literature York Notes* – Andrew Blades
- *Hamlet York Notes* – Jeff Wood
- *The Duchess of Malfi York Notes* – Stephen Sims
- *The Connell Guide to John Milton's Paradise Lost*
- *The Great Gatsby York Notes for A Level*—Julian Cowley