

**The Blue Coat School**

**English Department**

A Level English Literature

Year 12 Transition Tasks

**Welcome to A-Level English Literature!**

In preparation for the start of Year 12, please complete the tasks in this booklet and bring this to your first lesson. Each task will give you a flavour of each component. You will find a summary of the course on page two of this booklet.

Enjoy!

Key Stage Five Team

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| Name | |  |
| See the source image | | **The Blue Coat School English Department**  **EDEXCEL A Level English Literature**  COURSE CONTENT | | |
| **Component One**  **DRAMA**  **AO1**  **AO2**  **AO3**  **AO5** | | * Two essays * Two hours and 15 minutes * 60 marks in total * Open book examination (clean copies of texts)   **Section A: Shakespeare – *Othello***  Example Question: Explore how Shakespeare presents ………………………………… in *Othello.* You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading. [35 marks]  **Section B: 21st Century Drama – *A Streetcar Named Desire***  Example Question: Explore Williams’s presentation of …………………………………… in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors. [25 marks] | | |
| **Component Two**  **PROSE**  **AO1**  **AO2**  **AO3**  **AO4** | | * One essay * One hour and 15 minutes * 40 marks in total * Open book examination (clean copies of texts)   **Theme: Women and Society**  Texts: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte  *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini  Example Question: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts …………………………………………………………………………………………… You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors. [40 marks] | | |
| **Component Three**  **POETRY**  **AO1**  **AO2**  **AO3**  **AO4** | | * Two essays * Two hours and 15 minutes * 60 marks in total * Open book examination (clean copies of texts) and source booklet   **Section A – Post-2000 Specified Poetry**  Example Question: Read the poem ……………………………………… of the source booklet and re-read ………………………………………………………… from the *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002-2011.*  Compare the methods both poets use to explore …………………………………..[30 marks]  **Section B – Victorian Poet: Christina Rossetti**  Explore the ways in which Christina Rossetti explores ……………………… in ‘Remember’ and one other poem. You must discuss relevant contextual factors. [30 marks] | | |
| **Component Four**  **NON-EXAMINATION**  **AO1**  **AO2**  **AO3**  **AO4**  **AO5** | | * One comparative essay * 2500-3000 words * 60 marks in total   One extended comparative essay referring to two texts. You will compare *The Handmaid’s Tale* with another text. You will be provided with further guidance regarding texts for comparison. | | |

**Component One: Drama**

*Othello*

**TASK ONE**

*Othello* is one of Shakespeare’s most famous tragedies. It follows the conventions of a tragedy including the tragic hero cycle.

In preparation for studying *Othello*, define and revise the terms below. Think about a Shakespearean tragedy you have studied previously. Complete the final column with an example of how each feature of a tragedy was included i.e. Macbeth’s peripetia is the moment he commits regicide.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Definition** | **Example from another tragedy** |
| Hubris |  |  |
| Hamartia |  |  |
| Peripetia |  |  |
| Anagnorisis |  |  |
| Catharsis |  |  |
| Pathos |  |  |

**TASK TWO**

Read the summary of *Othello* below.

**Act I**

Before *Othello* begins, Roderigo has been pursuing Desdemona, a Venetian noblewoman. One night, he hears from his soldier friend, Iago, that Desdemona has secretly married his General, the Moorish Othello. Iago bears a grudge against Othello for overlooking Iago for a lieutenant position. Instead, Othello chose Michael Cassio, leaving Iago only at the low rank of ensign. Iago urges Roderigo to continue his pursuit of Desdemona. He knows Senator Brabantio, Desdemona's father, will dislike having Othello as a son-in-law. So late at night, Iago and Roderigo wake Brabantio and tell him the news of Desdemona. Brabantio angrily summons the militia to arrest Othello. At that moment, officers arrive to summon Brabantio to an urgent meeting of the Senate. The Senate is concerned about the imminent threat of a Turkish invasion fleet on Cyprus. Full of fury, Brabantio goes to the council.  Brabantio interrupts the council, claiming vengeance against Othello. Othello is already there because he has just been put in command of the forces to repel the Turks. Othello explains how his stories of military prowess have helped him earn Desdemona's love (good storytelling is the most important trait in a companion, after all). Afterwards, Desdemona is called to reinforce the tale and defend her marriage. Following Desdemona's defence, her father disowns her, and she chooses to go with Othello on his campaign. She plans to travel in the care of Lieutenant Cassio and with Emilia, Iago's wife.

**Act II**

In Cyprus, Montano, the governor of Cyprus, and his soldiers greet Cassio, Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia as they disembark. Othello soon arrives with news that storms at sea have dispersed the Turkish fleet. A night of celebration is proclaimed. Roderigo confesses doubts about his potential to woo Desdemona, but Iago assures him that there is hope. He urges Roderigo to challenge Cassio to a duel that night, since (as Iago claims) Desdemona is actually falling in love with him. When the night comes, Iago gets Cassio drunk, and Roderigo incites his anger. Montano, the governor, is stabbed during his attempt to contain Cassio. Othello is angered by the fight and blames Cassio, stripping him of his recently conferred officer status.

**Act III**

The next day, Iago convinces Cassio to ask Desdemona for help in regaining his post. When Cassio asks, Desdemona innocently agrees. Meanwhile, Iago has sown seeds of jealousy in Othello’s mind, suggesting that Desdemona is overfond of Cassio. With no reason to suspect Iago of bad intentions, Othello begins to watch his wife. Othello becomes angry when Desdemona cannot find the first gift (a handkerchief) he had ever given her. The handkerchief is embroidered with strawberries and especially important to Othello. But Desdemona had not lost the handkerchief. Iago had instructed Emilia, his wife, to take it. Iago then hid the handkerchief where Cassio would find it. When Desdemona urges her husband to reconsider Cassio’s demotion, Othello gets jealous and suspects her of infidelity.

**Act IV**

Iago continues to inflame this jealousy. He encourages Othello to listen in on, and misinterpret, part of a conversation between Cassio and his mistress, Bianca. Cassio and Bianca discuss how Cassio obtained the embroidered handkerchief that he then gives to Bianca to copy. Othello’s agitation at what he hears brings on an epileptic fit. After recovering, he orders Iago to kill Cassio. Desdemona cannot understand Othello's change of attitude towards her. Othello even strikes her in the presence of her relative, Lodovico, who has arrived as an ambassador from Venice. As she prepares for bed, she talks with Emilia, singing to relieve the distress she feels at losing the trust of her husband.

**Act V**

Meanwhile, Roderigo has begun to suspect Iago is not quite the friend he seems. Still Iago persuades him to attack Cassio that night (again, to be able to court Desdemona). In the fight that ensues, Iago goes undetected and wounds Cassio. He then enters again as himself to accuse and kill Roderigo for the act of wounding Cassio. Othello comes to his sleeping wife's bedroom to murder her as punishment for her supposed adultery. He smothers her with a pillow as she asserts her innocence. Emilia alerts the household, causing Iago and others to come to the scene. Othello defends himself, mentioning the handkerchief as evidence. Emilia realises what has happened and betrays Iago‘s plots against Othello. Iago, reacting to his wife's accusations, stabs and kills her. Iago is arrested and sent to trial after Othello wounds him (he doesn't even die). Othello, facing the inevitability of his own trial, uses a hidden weapon to commit suicide. The play ends with Cassio reinstated and placed in command as Governor of Cyprus.

**TASK THREE**

Now you have some familiarity with the plot of the play, read the article below from ‘The British Library’ and summarise the text using the Cornell notes page that follows This has been started for you.

**Misunderstanding in *Othello***Top of Form

***Othello* is a tragedy that proceeds from misunderstandings and miscommunication. Many of these errors are bound up with Iago's deception, but Michael Donkor looks at other, additional causes in the play.**

We might think of a night at the theatre as a deeply uplifting experience because of drama’s ability to *communicate*; because of playwrights’ abilities to express ‘finer feelings’ with a precision we mere mortals can only dream of. But with their misplaced letters and cunning disguises Shakespeare’s plays are so often marked by a *lack* of straightforward communication. [*Othello*](https://www.bl.uk/works/othello) is a powerful example of this, where the text’s tragedy essentially springs from acts of misunderstanding.

Our attention when exploring the idea of miscommunication in the text rightly rests on Iago and his deceptions. Posing leading questions and withholding information, Iago manipulates Othello’s latent insecurities about his new marriage to Desdemona, enabling Iago to shape how his ‘credulous’ master (4.1.43) construes ‘light behaviours’ (4.1.102). Even though Iago uses arachnid imagery to describe his own plotting, Iago’s whisperings in fact transform *Othello* into a spider. Othello feverishly spins a ‘web’ from self-loathing and faulty logic, a ‘web’ with a design so mesmerising and terrible in its potential significance that it diverts Othello from his previous, unshakeable belief in Desdemona, his ‘Excellent wretch’ (3.3.90). So, in his efforts to distort comprehension, Iago changes individuals and their perceptions of one another: as a result of Iago’s tireless work, Cassio’s stainless ‘reputation’ (2.3.194) for professionalism becomes ‘begrim’d’ (3.3.387) in Othello’s eyes, and Roderigo is ‘led’ to believe that Desdemona’s feelings for Othello are only fleeting fancies. But Iago’s ambitions extend beyond this. In his quest to obscure, Iago alters the meaning of objects as well as people – principally, of course, Desdemona’s handkerchief.

**The handkerchief**

Ironically, some of our first encounters with the handkerchief involve ideas of truth and pure intention. In Act 3, Scene 3, when Desdemona accidentally drops this precious ‘trifle’ (3.3.322) and it is discovered by Emilia, Emilia makes a ‘note to self’ to have its pattern reproduced to ‘please’ her husband (3.3.299). This episode is later imitated when, having ‘found’ the abandoned ‘napkin’, Cassio has such a liking for it that he demands Bianca replicate it for him (3.4.179). Indeed, thinking more about this connection between the handkerchief and the theme of faithful duplication, this ‘token’ (3.3.293) is an heirloom, handed down from Othello’s mother to her son. In giving Desdemona this delicate prize, Othello hopes it will mystically bind him with his wife in the same way that it did his mother and father. Iago’s attitude towards the handkerchief couldn’t be more contrasting. His approach is to manipulate and change the ‘napkin’s’ meaning entirely.

Audiences might detect within the handkerchief’s composition an inherent ambiguity, one which Iago plays with and exploits to achieve his own ends. On the one hand, this ‘little’ (3.3.287) piece of white cloth is spun from ‘hallowed’ silk that emblematises both the unblemished quality of the couple’s affections and Desdemona’s sexual purity (3.4.73). Exacerbating this, Othello informs us that this token’s fabric consists, in part, of mummified virgins’ hearts (3.4.75). But this bloodiness, along with its ‘spotted’ pattern of ‘red’ strawberries equally implies the loss of virginity. This blood represents the beginning of greater sexual experience and the potential dangers of those experiences. It is this second set of associations, with their implication of possible promiscuity, which Iago’s accusations draw on. This is perhaps most pertinent when Iago describes Cassio’s lascivious use of the napkin to wipe his beard at dinner, continuing the link between culinary and sexual consumption. Rather than serving as a memento of the couple’s innocent first encounters, Iago encourages Othello to repurpose the handkerchief as an accessory to adultery.

**The Venetian ‘state of mind’**

But most fascinatingly, the play asserts that these misreadings occur not just as result of the individual action, but also because of social forces. The text makes us wonder if there is something particular about the ‘world’ of Shakespeare’s Venice and the Venetian ‘state of mind’ which makes the play’s catalogue of misunderstandings inevitable.

**Discussion of Venice and London in Florio's Italian language manual**

A number of early 17th-century travelogues like Moryson’s *An Itinerary* (1617) revel in their stereotyping of southern Europeans as hot headed and impulsive. It’s worth considering how *Othello* seems to characterise Venice similarly, as an immensely sensationalist society – and perhaps such sensationalism adds to the characters’ difficulty in acquiring unequivocal knowledge. Desdemona’s flirtatious ‘devour[ing] up [of Othello’s] discourse’ and her ‘serious incl[ing]’ (1.3.146–50) towards his autobiographical stories are reflective of Shakespeare’s Venice at large; a society eager for the most colourful version of events and with no pressing concern for the truth of the tales it is told. This Venetian appetite for the scandalous as opposed to more nuanced thought is also present in the immediacy with which Brabantio believes the speculations about how his daughter’s union with Othello started. Chiming with the habits of his state, Brabantio leaps on the most outlandish of possible explanations for his daughter’s ‘disobedience’: witchcraft and violent coercion. In keeping with this, when Othello is questioned about how his relationship with Desdemona began, the difference between him and the surrounding noblemen is more rhetorical than racial: Othello declares that, for his testimony, he will a ‘round unvarnish’d tale deliver’ (1.3.90). Here Othello’s dignified and deliberate language strikingly resonates with diplomat Joannes Leo’s casting of ‘the African’ as ‘most honest’ and ‘high minded’. It is a counterpoint to the Venetian desire for salacious statements, a desire he is repeatedly confronted with.

**War**

As well as the supposed nature of the Venetian character and its impact on the text’s treatment of miscomprehension, the immediate political context of the play’s action is relevant too. Othello’s conflicted conscience and Desdemona’s fight to convince her beloved of her fidelity are microcosms for the play’s international conflict – the war with ‘general enemy Ottoman’ (1.3.49).

Given that it passes so quickly, we might justifiably overlook the importance of the storm that opens Act 2. But the dialogue’s focus on confusion here is telling. In this scene, Montano is desperate to find out what can be ‘discern[ed]’ at sea; his initial speech is dominated by a series of questions that emphasise his ignorance. The ‘gentlemen’ nearby, seemingly Montano’s only source of information, describe to him visions of ‘monstrous’ chaos, ‘wind-shak’d surges’ and ‘enchafed’ flood (2.1.13, 17). Such description, the frenetic tone and the fact that the feared foe ends up defeated by nature rather than by human design underline the chaos of war; where one minute, the foe is advancing terrifyingly; the next, the enemy is surprisingly pushed back. In such an atmosphere of unpredictable change, on an island defined as ‘warlike’ (2.1.43), misunderstanding between characters seems unavoidable. To extend the aquatic imagery, *Othello* is a play about ‘fish out of water’, not only with regards to Othello’s blackness amongst his white peers, but also in its investigation of what happens to military personnel when they are away from the frontline. In trying to establish the ‘honesty’ of his ensign and the conduct of his wife, audiences might feel that Othello transplants the rapid, impulsive decision-making of the battlefield to the ‘domestic’ sphere where we might hope for more measured meditation.

**Gender**

But perhaps the most moving of these socially and politically generated misunderstandings is the lack of sympathy between genders in the text. Contemporary friendship albums, like those of Walens and Koler, offer glimpses into lively Venetian court life. In many instances, pages in the texts delight with vignettes of amorous exchanges between men and women. However, when the beautifully crafted images of Walens’ work focus on masquerading and masks, they seem to touch on a particularly pertinent idea within the play with regards to the relationship between Venice’s men and women. *Othello* frequently implies that Venetian men have an insufficient grasp of the ‘true’ character of their womenfolk; men cannot see women for who they ‘really’ are. This is a society in which attractive women are dangerously and hyperbolically misconceived of as statues made from ‘monumental alabaster’ (5.1.5). This is a world where, despite female characters often expressing themselves with startling sharpness, they are seen as duplicitous ‘pictures out a’ doors’ (2.1.109). Emilia rails against this. In Act 4, Scene 3, she makes a rallying cry to:

Let husbands know  
Their wives have sense like them; they see, and smell,  
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,  
As husbands have. (4.3.93–96)

These are words of frustration at not being properly listened to or understood. In this compelling speech Emilia articulates herself in some of the wittiest and most acerbic poetry in the text.

Here, Emilia’s function as the ‘straight-talking’ working woman seeking to cut through patriarchal misreadings makes her, to my mind, one of the text’s most memorable figures. It gives her death a real poignancy too. In the most powerful performances of this scene, such as Ayesha Dharker’s recent offering with the RSC, Emilia’s cry before her death that ‘Twill out! twill out!’ (4.2.219) is ear-splittingly loud and fills the auditorium. As it should. Because the vigour of her voice and the force of these exclamations come from her recognition that her struggle is not just against the tendency for concealment and obscurity within her husband or Othello. She is shouting against a whole society’s desire to complicate what should be made plain.

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| **Title: Misunderstanding in *Othello*** | |
| **Questions** | **Answers** |
| What is *Othello* a powerful example of? | Tragedy springing from misunderstanding |
| **Summary** | |
|  | |

**Component One: Drama**

*A Streetcar Named Desire*

*A Streetcar Named Desire* is a twentieth century American play by Tennessee Williams. In preparation for studying this play, complete the tasks below.

**TASK ONE**

Research the terms below and summarise your findings.

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| **Realism** |
|  |
| **Plastic Theatre** |
|  |
| **Expressionism** |
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**TASK TWO**

Read the opening stage directions of the play below and answer the questions which follow.

*The exterior of a two-story corner building on a street in* ***New Orleans*** *which is named* ***Elysian Fields*** *and runs between the L & N tracks and the river. The section is poor but, unlike corresponding sections in other American cities, it has a* ***raffish charm.*** *The houses are mostly white frame, weathered gray, with rickety outside stairs and galleries and quaintly ornamented gables. This building contains two flats, upstairs and down. Faded white stairs ascend to the entrances of both. It is first dark of an evening early in May. The sky that shows around the dim white building is a peculiarly tender blue, almost a turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay. You can almost feel the warm breath of the brown river beyond the river warehouses with their faint redolences of bananas and coffee. A corresponding air is evoked by the music of Negro entertainers at a barroom around the corner. In this part of New Orleans you are practically always just around the corner, or a few doors down the street, from a tinny piano being played with the infatuated fluency of brown fingers. This "Blue Piano" expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here. Two women, one white and one colored, are taking the air on the steps of the building. The white woman is Eunice, who occupies the upstairs flat; the colored woman a neighbor, for New Orleans is a cosmopolitan city where there is a relatively warm and easy intermingling of races in the old part of town. Above the music of the "Blue Piano" the voices of people on the street can be heard overlapping.*

1. The play is set in New Orleans. Research where this is and what is culturally significant about it. Why do you think Williams may have chosen this setting?

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1. Research the name Elysian Fields? Where does it refer to? Why might this be significant to the play?

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1. What does the phrase ‘raffish charm’ mean? What does this imply about the setting?

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1. How does Williams create the impression of a poor neighbourhood? Use evidence to support your answer.

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1. How does Williams create the impression that this is a diverse community? Use evidence to support your answer.

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**Component Two: Prose**

*Wuthering Heights* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

For this component, you will compare two novels under the theme of **‘Women and Society’.**

**TASK ONE: *Wuthering Heights***

*Wuthering Height* is the only novel written by Emily Bronte. Research Bronte and her family. Summarise your findings below.

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| **Emily Bronte** |
|  |

**TASK TWO: *Wuthering Heights***

Bronte’s writing was influenced by the Romantic movement in literature and the gothic tradition. Research both of these movements and summarise your findings below.

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| **Romanticism** | |
|  |  |
| **Gothic Literature** | |
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**TASK THREE: *Wuthering Heights***

Read the opening section of then novel below and answer the questions that follow.

The novel is structured as a diary entry from a character called Mr Lockwood. At the start of the novel, he visits his landlord – Mr Heathcliff from whom he is renting a house called Thrushcross Grange. Mr Heathcliff lives nearby at Wuthering Heights.

1801.—

I have just returned from a visit to my landlord—the **solitary neighbour** that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so **completely removed from the stir of society**. A **perfect misanthropist’s heaven**: and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the **desolation** between us. A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I beheld his **black eyes withdraw so suspiciously** under their brows, as I rode up, and when his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution, still further in his waistcoat, as I announced my name.

‘Mr. Heathcliff?’ I said.

**A nod was the answer.**

‘Mr. Lockwood, your new tenant, sir. I do myself the honour of calling as soon as possible after my arrival, to express the hope that I have not inconvenienced you by my perseverance in soliciting the occupation of Thrushcross Grange: I heard yesterday you had had some thoughts—’

‘Thrushcross Grange is my own, sir,’ he interrupted, wincing. ‘I should not allow any one to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it—walk in!’

The ‘walk in’ was uttered with **closed teeth,** and expressed the sentiment, ‘Go to the Deuce’: even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathising movement to the words; and I think that circumstance determined me to accept the invitation: **I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly reserved than myself.**

1. Lockwood describes Heathcliff as ‘solitary’. What does this mean?

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1. Why has Lockwood moved to the Grange? Use evidence to support your answer.

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1. What does he imply when he calls where he is staying ‘a perfect misanthropist’s heaven’?

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1. What does the word ‘desolation’ mean?

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1. Lockwood tells us that Heathcliff’s ‘black eyes withdraw…suspiciously’. What does this reveal about him? Why might this be significant?

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1. What else do we learn about Heathcliff in this opening section? Use evidence to support your answer.

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**TASK FOUR: *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini explores the impact of Taliban rule on Afghanistan across the twentieth century.

Read the extract below from the start of the novel and answer the questions that follow.

**M**ariam was five years old the first time she heard the word *harami.*

It happened on a Thursday. It must have, because Mariam remembered that she had been restless and pre-occupied that day, the way she only was on Thursdays, the day when Jalil visited her at the *kolba*. To pass the time until the moment that she would see him at last, crossing the knee-high grass in the clearing and waving, Mariam had climbed a chair and taken down her mother’s Chinese tea set. The tea set was the sole relic that Mariam’s mother, Nana, had of her own mother, who had died when Nana was two. Nana cherished each blue-and-white porcelain piece, the graceful curve of the pot’s spout, the hand-painted finches and chrysanthemums, the dragon on the sugar bowl, meant to ward off evil.

It was this last piece that slipped from Mariam’s fingers, that fell to the wooden floorboards of the *kolba* and shattered.

When Nana saw the bowl, her face flushed red and her upper lip shivered, and her eyes, both the lazy one and the good settled on Mariam in a flat, unblinking way. Nana looked so mad that Mariam feared the *jinn* would enter her mother’s body again. But the *jinn* didn’t come, not that time. Instead, Nana grabbed Mariam by the wrists, pulled her close, and through gritted teeth, said, “You are a clumsy little *harami*. This is my reward for everything I’ve endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little *harami.*”

1. A ‘harami’ is a derogatory term for a child born outside marriage. Why is it significant that this is the first thing we are told in the novel? What does it establish about Mariam?

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1. Who could Jalil be? How does Mariam feel about him? Use evidence to support your answer.

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1. What does Mariam do that upsets her mother (whom she refers to as ‘Nana’)? What could the significance of this item be?

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1. How does Nana react to this incident? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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1. How does Nana feel about Mariam? Use evidence to support your answer.

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**Component Three: Poetry**

Post 2000 Poetry Anthology and the poetry of Christina Rossetti

For the poetry component, you will study a range of modern poems and a range of poems by the Victorian poet Christina Rossetti.

**TASK ONE: Post 2000 Poetry Anthology**

Read the poem ‘To My Nine-Year-Old Self’ on the next page and answer the questions to explore the poem.

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| **To My Nine-Year-Old Self**  **Helen Dunmore**  [**You**](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548005) [must](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14547998) [forgive me](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300508). [Don't look so surprised, perplexed , and eager to be gone](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300510) [balancing on your hands or on the tightrope](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548014) [You would rather run than walk, rather climb than run rather leap from a height than anything.](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300519)  [I have spoiled](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548044) this body [we once shared.](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548048) [Look at the scars](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548075), and watch the way I move, careful of a [bad back or a bruised foot](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548050). [Do you remember how, three minutes after waking we'd jump straight out of the ground floor window into the](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300544) [summer morning](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548058)  [That **dream** we had, no doubt it's as **fresh** in your mind as the](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300551) [white paper](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-13589658) to write it on. [We made a start, but **something else came up**](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300562) [-](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548092) [a **baby vole**, or a **bag of sherbet lemons** - and besides](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300579) [that](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548090) [**summer of ambition created an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap**](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300585) **and a**[**den by a cesspit**](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548124)  **I'd like to say** [we](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548131) [could](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548128) be friends but the truth is we have [nothing in common](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548135) [beyond a few shared years](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300602). [I won't keep you then.](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548137) Time to pick [rosehips](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-18073123) for [tuppence a pound](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548147), time to hide down [scared lanes](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548148) [from men in cars after girl-children](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548152)  [or to lunge out over the water on the rope that swings from](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300632) [that tree](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548154) [long buried in housing](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548159) [-](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300644) But no, I shan't [cloud your morning](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548168). [God knows I have fears enough for us both -](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300662)  [I leave you](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548194) in an [**ecstasy**](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-14548201)**of**[**concentration**](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-21073398) [slowly **peeling a ripe scab** from your knee to **taste it on your tongue**.](https://genius.com/Helen-dunmore-to-my-nine-year-old-self-annotated#note-15300686) | What does the title suggest the poem will be about? |
| What technique does the poet use in the opening line: ‘**You** must forgive me’?  How does the poet create the impression that they are talking to a child? Use evidence to support your answer. |
| How does the speaker describe her body as an adult? How does this contrast her memory of being a child?  What memories does she have of her youth? Why is this significant? |
| What impression does the speaker create of her childhood? Use evidence to support your answer. |
| How does the mood of the poem change here?  Why does the speaker mention ‘men in cars after girl-children’? |
| How does the speaker reflect on the change that has happened over time? What does this reflect about the shift from childhood to adulthood? |
| The end of the poem returns to the idea of being a child. How does the poet make this sound and why? Use evidence to support your answer., |

**TASK TWO: Christina Rossetti**

Christina Rossetti was a Victorian poet and closely associated with the pre-Raphaelite movement, which influenced her poetry.

Research Rossetti and this movement below and summarise your findings.

|  |  |
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| **Christina Rossetti** | |
|  |  |
| **Pre-Raphaelite Movement** | |
|  |  |

**Component Four: Non-Examination Assessment**

*The Handmaid’s Tale* and one other text for comparison

As part of your English Literature A Level, you will complete a piece of coursework based on *The Handmaid’s Tale* and another text of your choice.

**TASK ONE**

Research dystopian literature and summarise your findings below.

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| **Dystopian Literature** | |
|  |  |

**TASK TWO**

Read the opening chapter from the novel below and highlight all the evidence which suggests that the setting is dystopian.

**Chapter One**

We slept in what had once been a gymnasium. The floor was of varnished wood, with stripes and circles painted on it, for the games that were formerly played there; the hoops for the basketball nets were still in place, though the nets were gone. A balcony ran round the room, for the spectators, and I thought I could smell, faintly like an afterimage, the pungent scent of sweat, shot through with the sweet taint of chewing gum and perfume from the watching girls, felt-skirted as I knew from pictures, later in mini-skirts, then pants, then in one earring, spiky green-streaked hair. Dances would have been held there; the music lingered, a palimpsest of unheard sound, style upon style, an undercurrent of drums, a forlorn wail, garlands made of tissue-paper flowers, cardboard devils, a revolving ball of mirrors, powdering the dancers with a snow of light.

There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without shape or name. I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there in then, in the small of the back, or out back, in the parking lot, or in the television room with the sound turned down and only the pictures flickering over lifting flesh.

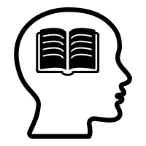
We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability? It was in the air; and it was still in the air, an afterthought, as we tried to sleep, in the army cots that had been set up in rows, with spaces between so we could not talk. We had flannelette sheets, like children’s, and army-issue blankets, old ones that still said U.S. We folded our clothes neatly and laid them on the stools at the ends of the beds. The lights turned down but not out. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts.

No guns though, even they could not be trusted with guns. Guns were for the guards, specially picked the Angels. The guards weren’t allowed inside the building except when called, and we weren’t allowed out, except for our walks, twice daily, two by two around the football field which was enclosed now by a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The Angels stood outside it with their backs to us. They were objects of fear to us, but of something else as well. If only they would look. If only we could talk to them. Something could be exchanged, we thought, some deal made, some trade-off, we still had our bodies. That was our fantasy.

We learned to whisper almost without sound. In the semi-darkness, we could stretch out our arms, when the Aunts weren’t looking, and touch each other’s hands across space. We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds turned sideways, watching each other’s mouths. In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed:

Alma. Janine. Dolores. Moira. June.

**Further Reading**



As an A Level English Literature student, it’s important that you read as widely as possible. The list below are A Level standard texts/authors/playwrights/poets you might enjoy! Happy reading!

**Prose**

Chinua Achebe Things Fall Apart

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Purple Hibiscus, Americanah

Monica Ali Brick Lane

Margaret Atwood Alias Grace, Oryx and Crake, The Blind Assassin

Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Sense and Sensibility

Charlotte Brontë Jane Eyre

AS Byatt Possession

Angela Carter The Bloody Chamber, Nights at the Circus,

Joseph Conrad The Secret Agent, The Heart of Darkness

Charles Dickens Great Expectations, Hard Times, Bleak House

Daphne Du Maurier Rebecca

George Eliot The Mill on The Floss, Middlemarch

Sebastian Faulks Birdsong, Charlotte Gray

F. Scott Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night

E.M. Forster A Room with a View, A Passage to India

Elizabeth Gaskell North and South, Wives and Daughters

Gabriel Garcia Marquez Love in the Time of Cholera

Graham Greene Brighton Rock

Thomas Hardy Far from the Madding Crowd, Tess of the D’Urbervilles

L.P. Hartley The Go-Between

Ernest Hemingway For Whom the Bell Tolls, A Farewell to Arms

Aldous Huxley Brave New World

Kazuo Ishiguro The Remains of the Day, Never Let Me Go

James Joyce Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Dubliners

Jhumpa Lahiri The Namesake

D.H Lawrence Sons and Lovers, Women in Love

Harper Lee To Kill a Mockingbird

Andrea Levy Small Island

Hilary Mantel Wolf Hall, Bring out the Bodies

Ian McEwan Atonement, Enduring Love

Toni Morrison Beloved

Iris Murdoch The Bell, The sea, the sea

George Orwell Nineteen Eighty-Four

Arundhati Roy The God of Small Things

Sylvia Plath The Bell Jar

Annie Proulx Postcards, The Shipping News

Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea

John Steinbeck The Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden

Bram Stoker Dracula

Alice Walker The Colour Purple

Sarah Waters The Little Stranger

Jeanette Winterson Oranges are not the only Fruit

Zadie Smith White Teeth, NW, On Beauty

Virginia Woolf Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse

**Drama**

You could read or watch (or both) performances of texts by the following playwrights:

Samuel Beckett

Alan Bennett

Bertolt Brecht

Jez Butterworth

Anton Chekhov

Shelagh Delaney

Brian Friel

Henrik Ibsen

Arthur Miller

Harold Pinter

William Shakespeare

George Bernard Shaw

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Polly Stenham

Sam Shephard

Tom Stoppard

John Webster

Tennessee Williams

Timberlake Wertenbaker

Oscar Wilde

**Poetry**

Simon Armitage

WH Auden

William Blake

Evan Boland

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Lord Byron

Geoffrey Chaucer

ST Coleridge

Emily Dickinson

Carol Ann Duffy

TS Eliot

Seamus Heaney

Ted Hughes

John Keats

Philip Larkin

John Milton

Wilfred Owen

Sylvia Plath

Jacob Sam-La Rose

Siegfried Sassoon

Percy Shelley

Alfred Lord Tennyson

William Wordsworth

**Literary Non-Fiction**

It would also be beneficial for you to read literary non-fiction. Have a look at the recommended texts below:

Anon I Am The Secret Footballer

Maya Angelou I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Allie Brosh Hyperbole and a Half

Bill Bryson The Lost Continent, Notes from a Small Island

Alan Bennett Writing Home

Vera Brittain Testament of Youth

Truman Capote In Cold Blood

Jenny Diski Skating to Antarctica

Anna Funder Stasiland

Anne Frank The Diary of a Young Girl

Robert Graves Goodbye To All That

Stephen Grosz The Examined Life

George Orwell Down and Out in Paris and London

Alexander Masters Stuart: A Life Backwards

Helen Macdonald H is for Hawk

Nelson Mandela Long Walk to Freedom

Solomon Northrop Twelve Years a Slave

Jeannette Winterson Why Be Happy When You Could be Normal?

Xinran What the Chinese Don’t Eat