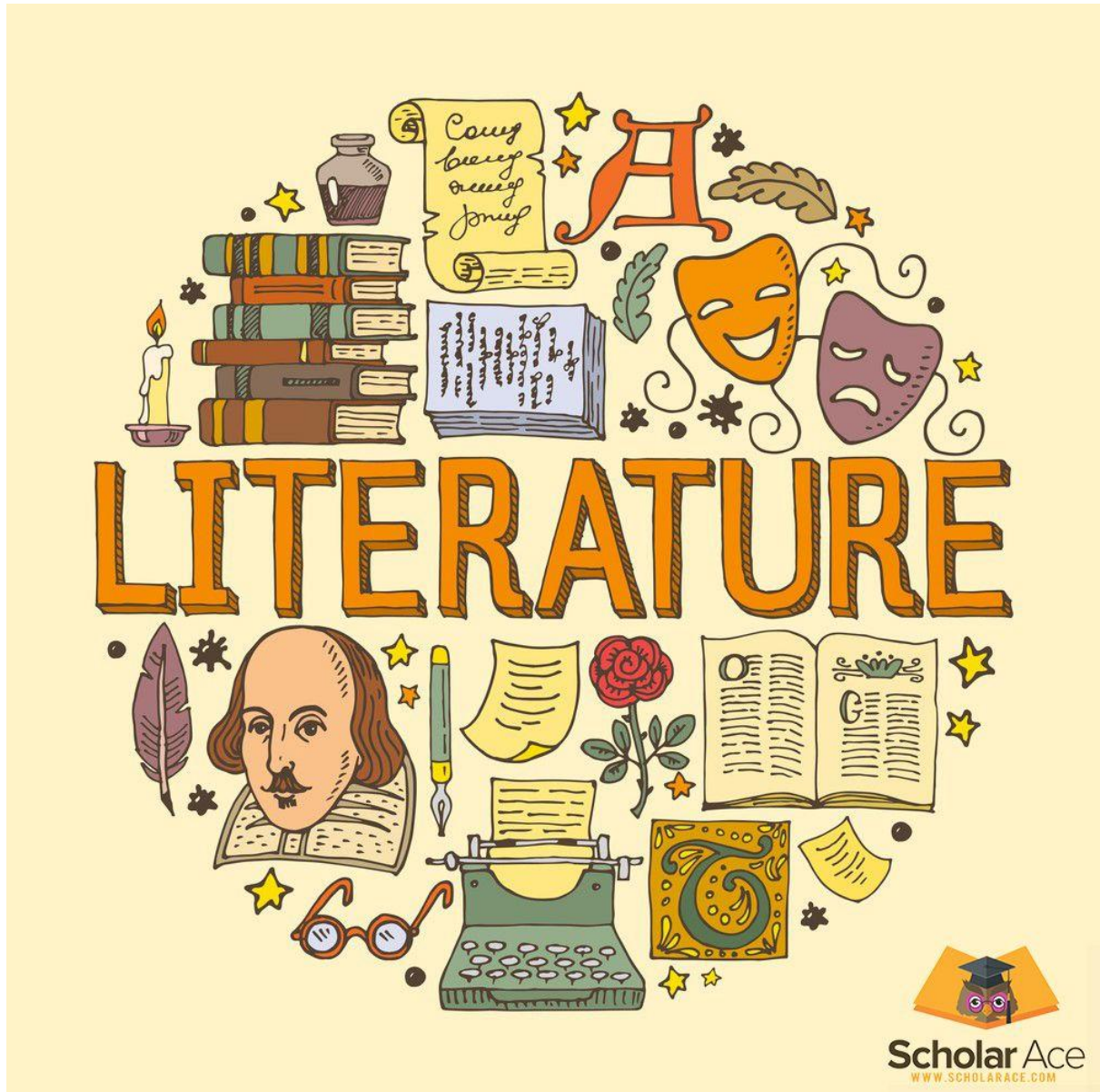


KS5 English Literature

Bridging Work



Watch List

Here are some things you can watch that will give you a head start in English Literature. Take notes in a notebook, and bring them to your first lesson, as you can put them into your English folder.

Shakespeare's Rise of a Genius

(Free on BBC Iplayer)

All episodes are useful, but the third is the most relevant to our studies.

[BBC iPlayer - Shakespeare: Rise of a Genius](#)

Series 1 of The Handmaid's Tale

(On Amazon Prime or YouTube)

You will be studying The Handmaid's Tale next year.

[THE HANDMAIDS TALE Season 1 TRAILER \(2017\) Hulu Series \(youtube.com\)](#)

Introduction to Feminist Theory

[Literary Theory - Introduction to Feminism \(youtube.com\)](#)

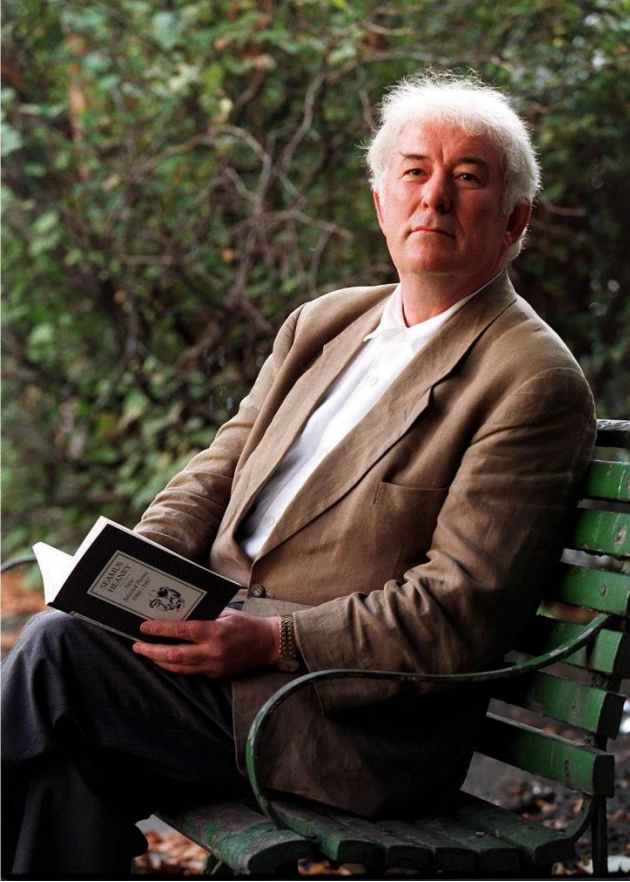
Introduction to Marxist Theory

[Literary Theory - Introduction to Marxism - YouTube](#)

Introduction to Post Colonialist Theory

[Literary Theory - Introduction to Post colonialism \(youtube.com\)](#)

Post 2000 Poetry Tasks



Important Poet: Seamus Heaney

You may remember Seamus Heaney from his poem *Storm on the Island* that you studied at GCSE. Heaney was an Irish-born, incredibly talented poet, playwright and translator. His work struck even the biggest names in the poetry world with awe, and he became, over time, a national treasure due to his poetic mastermind.

Heaney was known all over the world for his work, particularly for his poetry, and was reported to be 'the most important Irish poet since Yeats' by Robert Lowell. He was named 'the greatest poet of our age' by John Sutherland. In 1995, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature, and after that continued to push his poetry career, serving as a professor at Harvard University until 1997.

Heaney's work explores many themes: man's relationship with nature, youth and ageing, loss, memory, family, tradition and the changing world.

You will be studying Post-2000 poetry for your A Level exam next year. Studying Heaney's work and practising your analysis skills will be very helpful.

Death of a Naturalist

Have a look at the following three Seamus Heaney poems from his collection 'Death of a Naturalist'.

Make a note of poetic methods that interest you and any of the above themes that you spot.

There are also analysis questions you can answer after each poem.

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.

Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jam-potfuls of the jellied
Specks to range on window sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until
The fattening dots burst, into nimble
Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

How does Heaney present youth and innocence in this poem?

Digging

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound

When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

How does Heaney explore ideas about family and identity in this poem?

Mid-Term Break

I sat all morning in the college sick bay
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.
At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying—
He had always taken funerals in his stride—

And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram
When I came in, and I was embarrassed
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble'.
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,
He lay in the four-foot box as in his cot.
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four-foot box, a foot for every year.

How does Heaney explore ideas about loss in this poem?

Female Poetry

Take a look at the following three poems written by women.

Make a note of poetic methods that interest you.

There are also analysis questions you can answer after each poem.

After the Lunch – Wendy Cope

On Waterloo Bridge, where we said our goodbyes,
the weather conditions bring tears to my eyes.
I wipe them away with a black woolly glove
And try not to notice I've fallen in love.

On Waterloo Bridge I am trying to think:
This is nothing. you're high on the charm and the drink.
But the juke-box inside me is playing a song
That says something different. And when was it wrong?

On Waterloo Bridge with the wind in my hair
I am tempted to skip. You're a fool. I don't care.
the head does its best but the heart is the boss-
I admit it before I am halfway across.

How does Cope portray ideas about falling in love?

I, being born a woman and distressed – Edna Vincent Millay

I, being born a woman and distressed
By all the needs and notions of my kind,
Am urged by your propinquity to find
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:
So subtly is the fume of life designed,
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,
And leave me once again undone, possessed.
Think not for this, however, the poor treason
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,
I shall remember you with love, or season
My scorn with pity,—let me make it plain:
I find this frenzy insufficient reason
For conversation when we meet again.

How does Millay explore ideas about female sexuality here?

For My Lover, Returning To His Wife – Ann Sexton

She is all there.
She was melted carefully down for you
and cast up from your childhood,
cast up from your one hundred favourite aggies.
She has always been there, my darling.
She is, in fact, exquisite.
Fireworks in the dull middle of February
and as real as a cast-iron pot.
Let's face it, I have been momentary.

**How does Sexton portray ideas
about infidelity in this poem?**

A luxury. A bright red sloop in the harbour.
My hair rising like smoke from the car window.
Littleneck clams out of season.
She is more than that. She is your have to have,
has grown you your practical your tropical growth.
This is not an experiment. She is all harmony.
She sees to oars and oarlocks for the dinghy,
has placed wild flowers at the window at breakfast,
sat by the potter's wheel at midday,
set forth three children under the moon,
three cherubs drawn by Michelangelo,
done this with her legs spread out
in the terrible months in the chapel.
If you glance up, the children are there
like delicate balloons resting on the ceiling.
She has also carried each one down the hall
after supper, their heads privately bent,
two legs protesting, person to person,
her face flushed with a song and their little sleep.
I give you back your heart.
I give you permission —
for the fuse inside her, throbbing
angrily in the dirt, for the bitch in her
and the burying of her wound —
for the burying of her small red wound alive —
for the pale flickering flare under her ribs,
for the drunken sailor who waits in her left pulse,
for the mother's knee, for the stocking,
for the garter belt, for the call —
the curious call
when you will burrow in arms and breasts
and tug at the orange ribbon in her hair
and answer the call, the curious call.
She is so naked and singular
She is the sum of yourself and your dream.
Climb her like a monument, step after step.
She is solid.
As for me, I am a watercolour.
I wash off.