**A Level English Literature at Beths**



Transition Booklet from GCSE English Literature to A Level English Literature

This booklet aims to:

* Inform you about the A Level English Literature course
* Help you with the transition from GCSE to A Level
* Provide you with activities to familiarise you with the skills and required approach for studying English Literature at A Level
* Provide you with information about the core texts on the course
* Provide you with a wider reading list

**A Level English Literature – Edexcel**

**Course Outline**

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| **DRAMA 60 marks 30% weighting 2hrs 15 mins** | |
| **Section A: Shakespeare (35 marks)** | ***Othello* – essay question from choice of two** |
| **Section B:**  **Other Drama (25 marks)** | ***A Streetcar Named Desire***  **Tennessee Williams – essay question from choice of two** |

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| --- | --- |
| **PROSE 40 marks 20% weighting 1 hour 15 mins** | |
| ***Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and The Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood*** | **One comparative essay from choice of two** |

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| **POETRY 60 marks 30% weighting 2hrs 15 mins** | |
| **Section A:**  **Contemporary Poetry (30 marks)** | ***Poems from Decade* compared to unseen – choice of two** |
| **Section B:**  ***Romantics*  (30 marks)** | **One essay from choice of two** |

**Coursework:**

**60 marks 20% weighting 2500-3000 words**

**One extended comparative essay referring to two texts – ‘The Great Gatsby’ and ‘The Death of a Salesman’.**

**What are the aims and objectives of the course?**

**Whilst completing the A Level English Literature course you will:**

● read widely and independently – this includes set texts and texts that you choose

● engage critically and creatively with a substantial number of texts

● develop and effectively apply your knowledge of literary analysis and evaluation to the texts that you study

● explore the contexts of the texts you are reading and others’ interpretations of them

● undertake independent and sustained studies to deepen your appreciation and understanding of English literature, including its changing traditions.

**How to complete this booklet:**

We have selected a range of activities for you to complete: some will ask you to take a step back and think about what it means to study literature, whilst others will allow you to be more active in your own approach to examples of literature and develop your skills of analysis and evaluation.

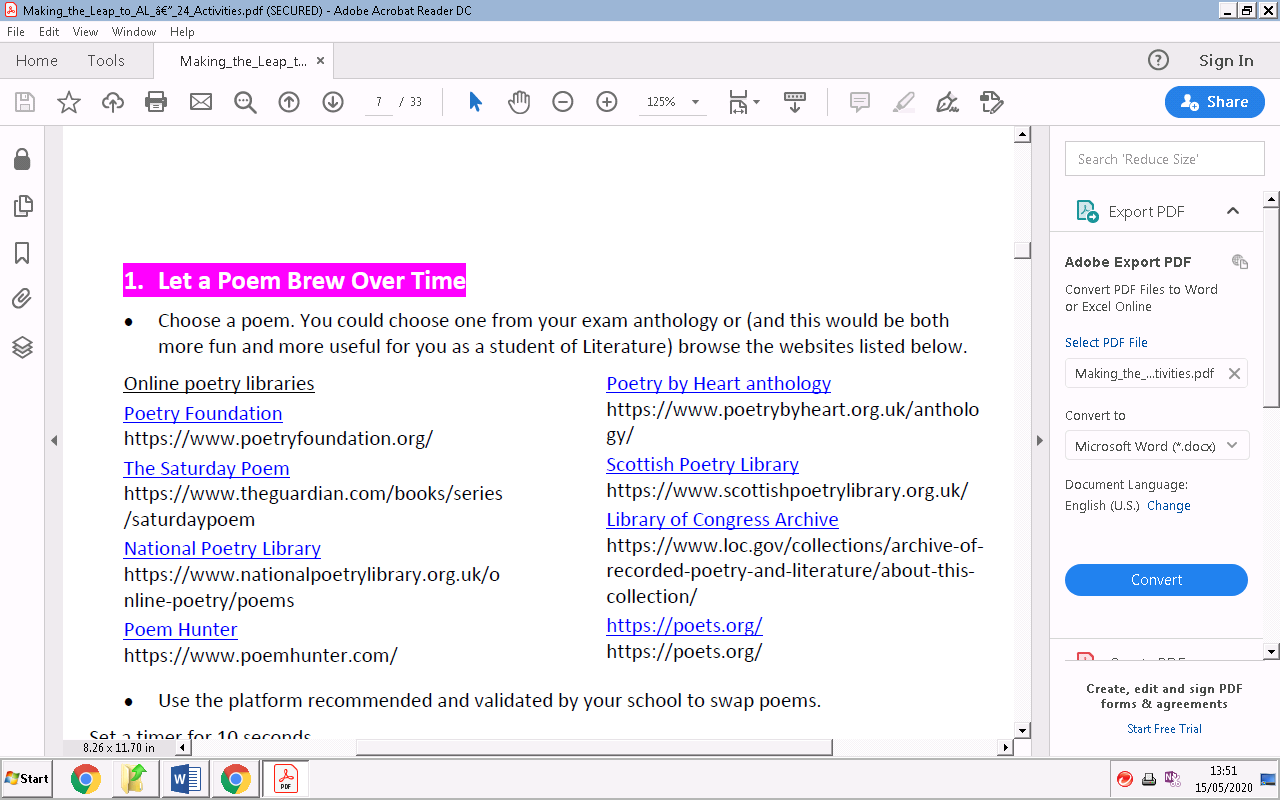
We would like you to complete the 5 tasks below so that you get an overall understanding of the skills and various approaches to literature that the A Level English Literature course will present to you. Look at all of the tasks first before you start to complete them so that you can organise and manage your time effectively (some will take longer than others!).

You must then complete the reading and research tasks based on the core texts of the course. Please bring all completed work to your first English lesson next academic year.

We hope that you enjoy immersing yourself in the world of English literature and are looking forward to discussing your ideas and looking at what you produce when the course begins!

1. **Let a Poem Brew Over Time**

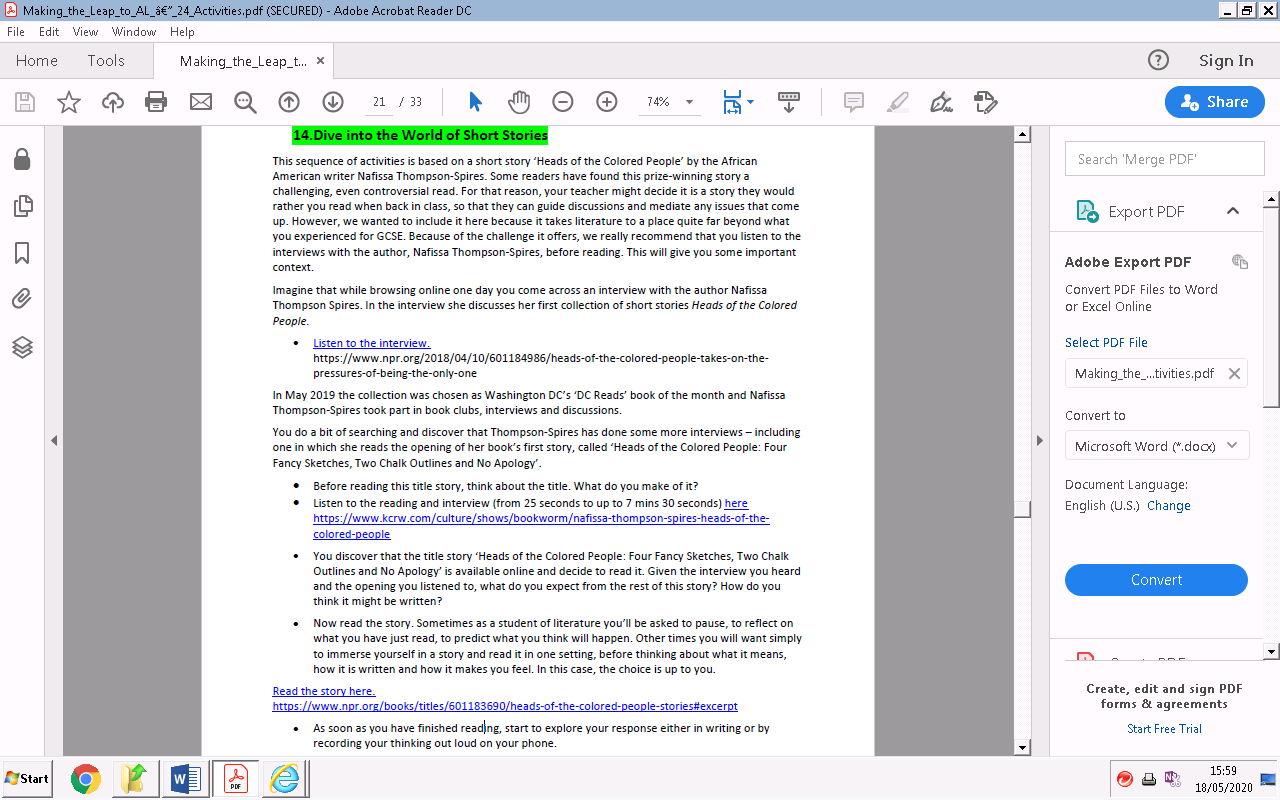
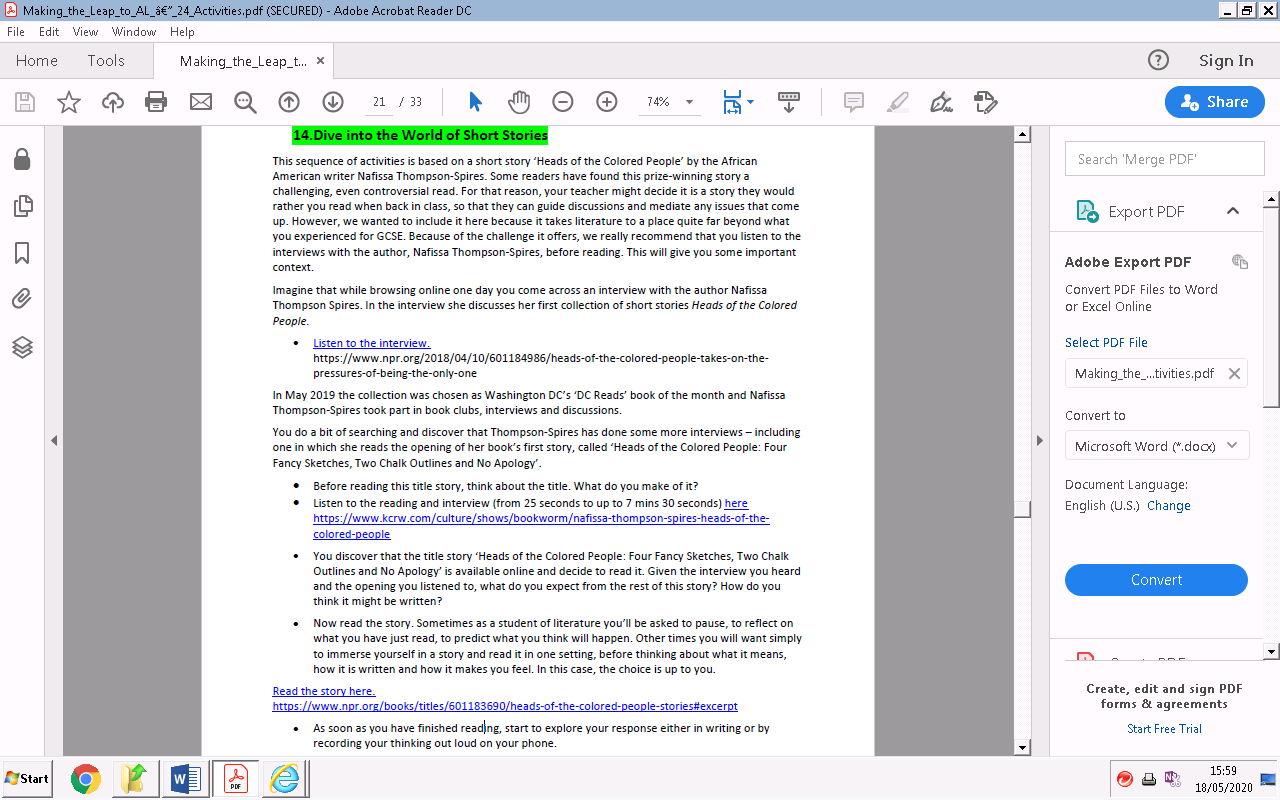
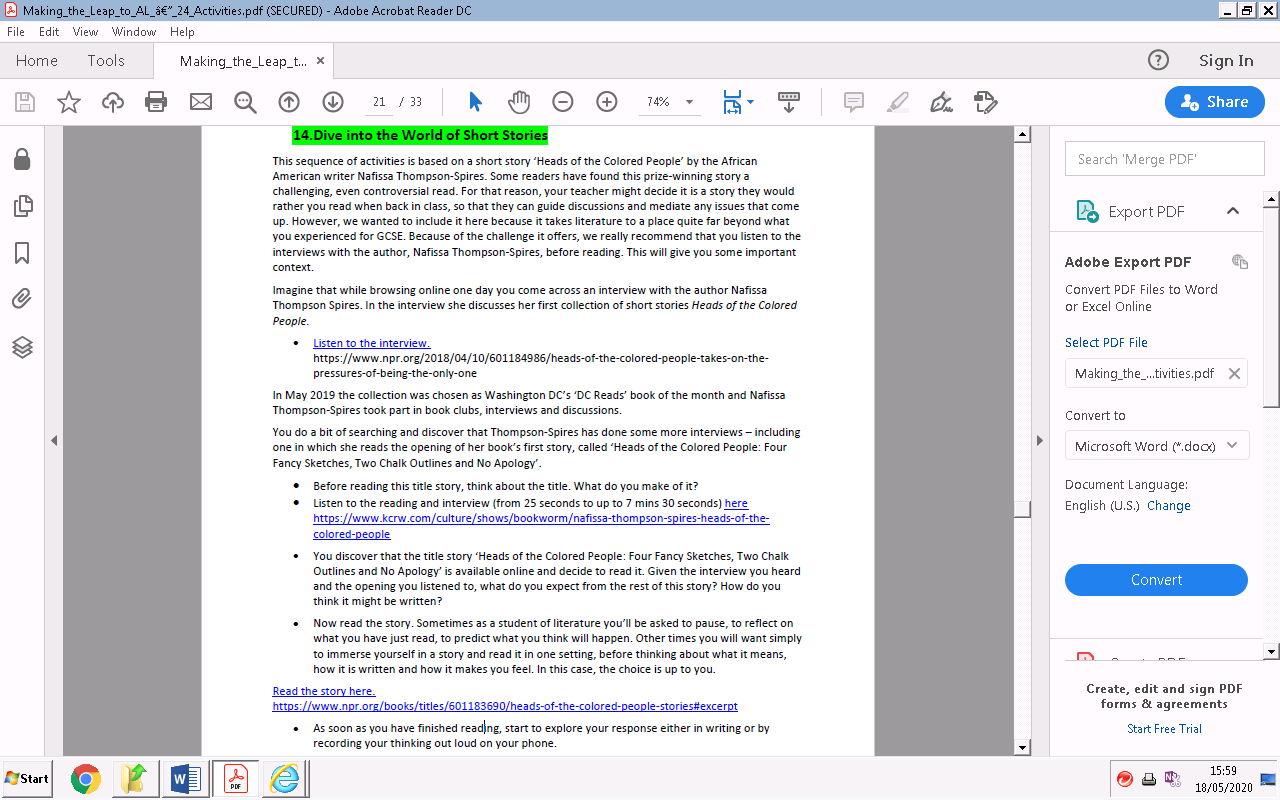
Choose a poem. Look at the links below to help you find a poem that interests and intrigues you.



* Set a timer for 10 seconds.
* Do a ‘snap shot’ 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, spend about 10 minutes reading the poem and writing about it in anyway you want. You might write about what you like or you are puzzled by or you might just ask questions.
* On the last day, read the poem again, read what you have written and then make notes on how your thoughts and feelings about the poem have changed over the last week. What do you feel are the most important aspects of the poem? Which parts stand out the most? Are there any patterns of language or repeated ideas that strike you?

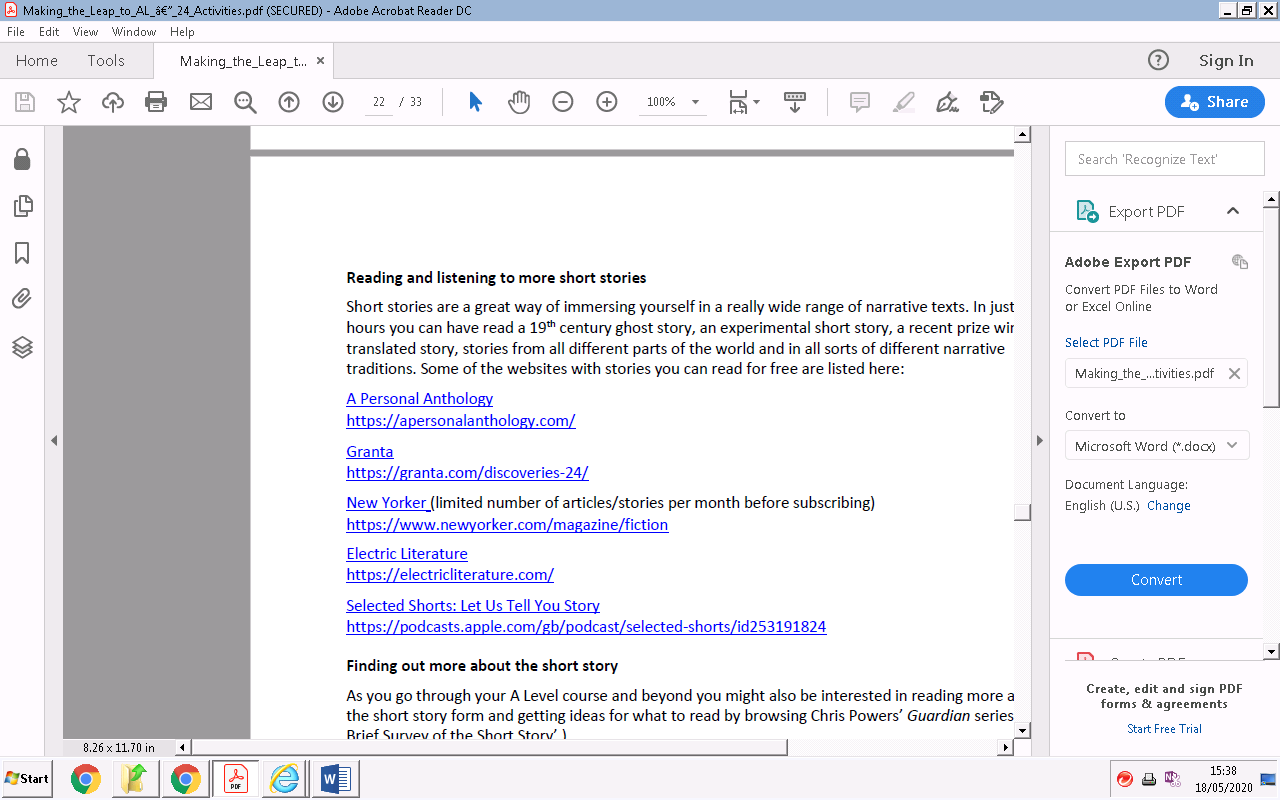
1. **Dive into the World of Short Stories**

The sequence of activities below are based on a short story from the collection ‘Heads of the Colored People’ by the African American writer Nafissa Thompson-Spires. It is a challenging and controversial read, but is exciting, modern and powerful! It is also very different to the texts that you will have done at GCSE and deliberately pushes you out of your comfort zone. Complete the activties in the order set out below so that you understand the context of the story before you read it.

* **Task 1**: Listen to the interview in the link below. The author discusses her first collection of short stories ‘Heads of the Colored People.’
* In May 2019 the collection of stories was chosen as Washington DC’s ‘DC Reads’ book of the month and Nafissa Thompson- Spires took part in book clubs, interviews and discussions.
* The story from the collection that we are going to focus on is ‘Heads of the Colored People: Four Fancy Sketches, Two Chalk Outlines and No Apology.’
* **Task 2 :** Before you read the story, write down your initial thoughts and feelings about the title.
* **Task 3:** Listen to the reading and interview in the link below (from 25 seconds to 7 minutes 30 seconds). What do you expect the story will be about?
* **Task 4:** Read the story itself (see the link below). It is written in a meta-narrative style which means that it is a story about storytelling and acknowledges that it is a story whilst being narrated. This is a controversial style, so take your time reading it and thinking about how it makes you feel.
* **Task 5:** As soon as you have read the story, write down your initial thoughts and reactions. Start by crystalising what the story is about for you by completing this sentence: ‘Heads of Colored People is about… and… But…’. Now write down your ideas in an exploratory way – remember, this is about your reaction to the story, so do not worry about getting it right or wrong! We will be sharing these thoughts when we start the course together.

**Exploring more short stories**

Short stories are a great way of immersing yourself in a really wide range of narrative texts. If you have enjoyed this task, explore the websites below and read more short stories!



1. **Watch an Online Play**

During your A Level English Literature course you will study a range of literary forms: prose, poetry and plays. It is important to remember that each of these have unique techniques that writers deploy to prompt their readers and audiences to think. In plays, playwrites use a range of dramatic techqniues to engage and communicate with their audience. The best way to understand the effects of these techniques is to watch a play. Of course reading it is important, but you can only truly understand and appreciate the writer’s craft when you watch a piece of drama in performance.

To help you do this, we would like you to watch two plays online. One must be a Shakespearean play and the other should be a play of your choice – explore the resources below and see what you can find!

* Digital Theare offers a wide range of plays to watch on-demand (including the Royal Shakespeare Company). Although this is a subscription site, some of their plays are avaiable 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 have a wide range of plays which can be rented or bought at <https://globeplayer.tv/all>

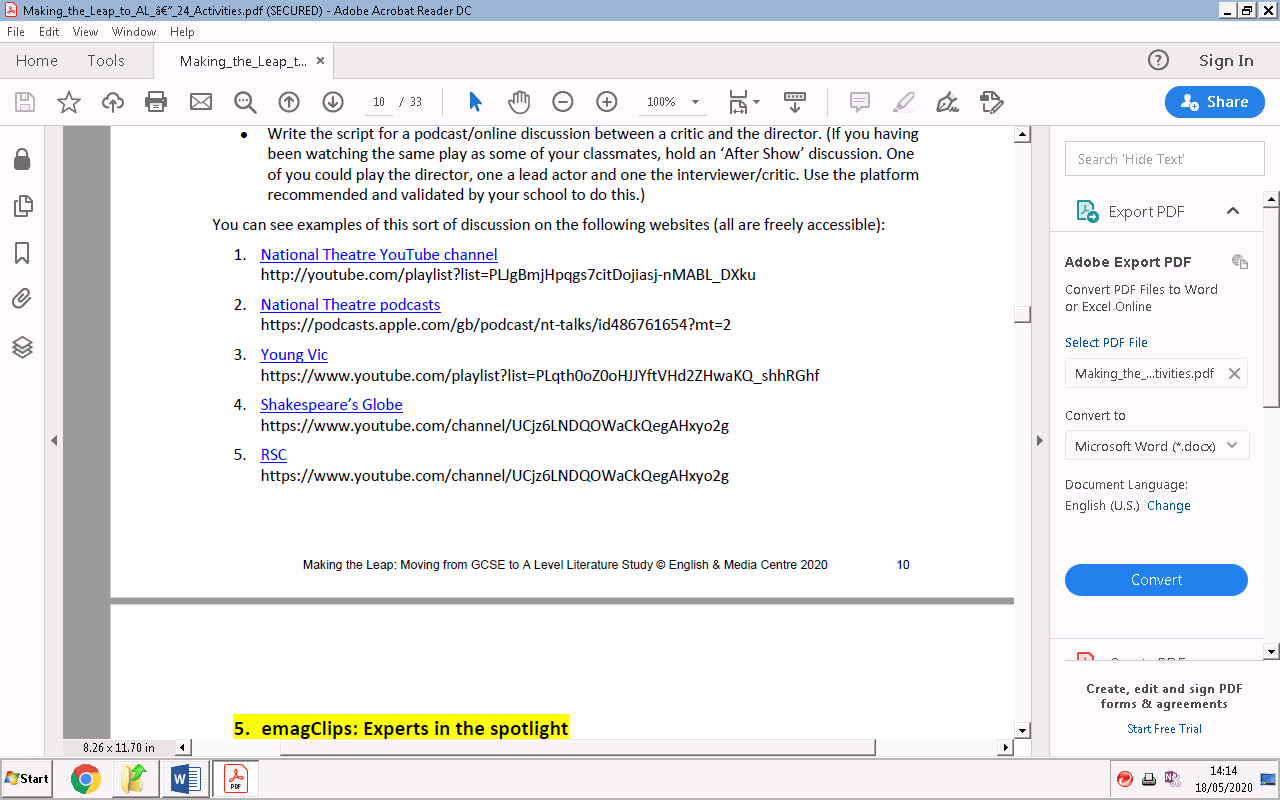
When you have watched the performance, complete the tasks below:

**For the Shakespearean play:**

* Write a brief review (half a page of A4, typed).
  + What did you enjoy the most about the play?
  + Which aspects of the play did you find most intriguing?
  + Do you have any questions now that you have watched the play?
  + What kind of dramatic devices were used to engage you and make you think? Consider the staging, props, entrances/ exits, scenery, costume, music, stage directions, symbols or motifs.
  + Can you think of any other ways in which the play could have been performed to help enhance its themes/ ideas?

**For the non-Shakespearean play:**

* Write the script for a podcast or online discussion between a critic and the director of the play.
* You can see examples of these kind of discussions below:



1. **Exploring Emagazine and Emag Clips**

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 more generally. During your English Literature A Level you will be expected to read a range of critical opinions about texts and use them in your own essays.

We have a subscription to the magazine that you can access by following the link and entering the details below:

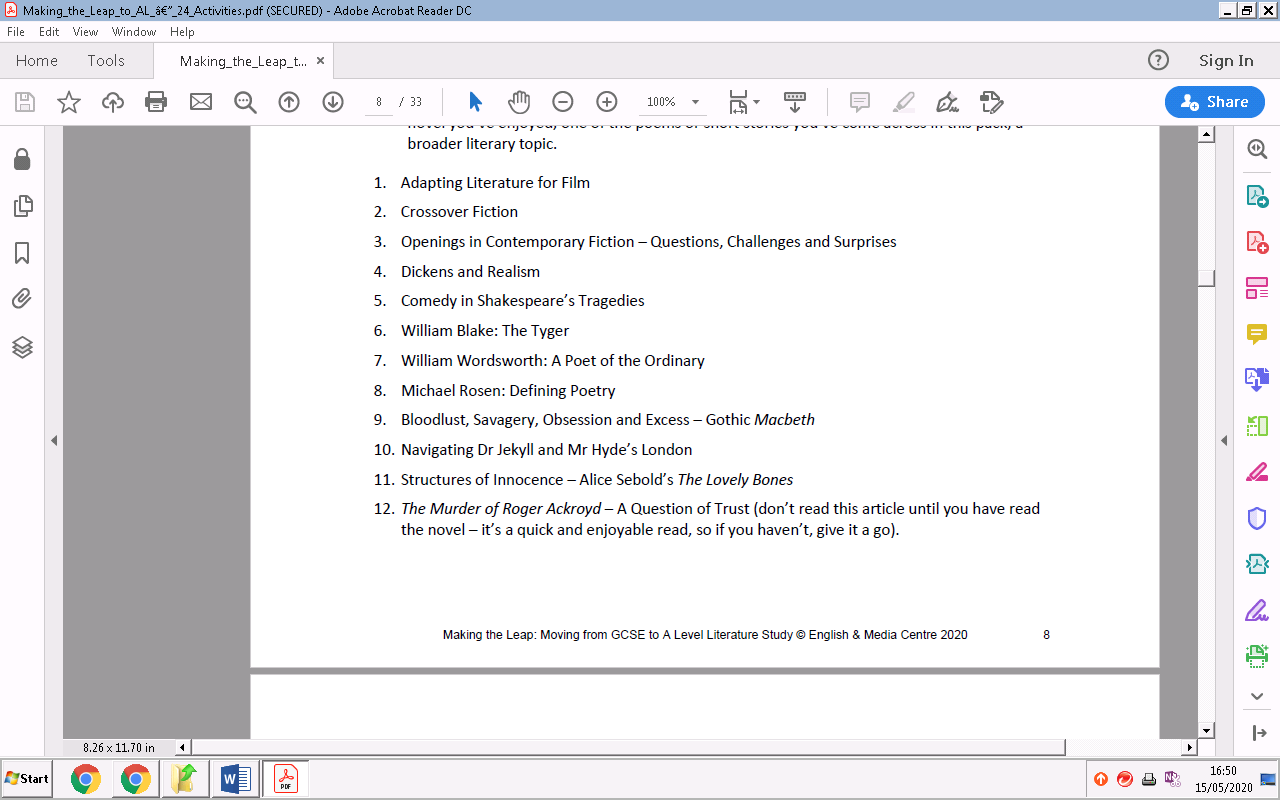
<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/e-magazine>

Username: mage2018

Password: beths2018

* Dip into the openings of several articles, and choose the one that most immediately grabs your attention. You could choose one about a novel, author or genre that you read for your GCSE or just something that grabs your attention.

Here are some suggestions:



* You could also read about one of the set texts that you will be studying at A Level (*Othello, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Color Purple, Hard Times, Romantic Poetry, or Poems of the Decade).*
* Read the article and pick out three significant points that stand out to you. These could be ideas that you find interesting, that you want to questions (perhaps because you disagree or 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.

**Extra Challenge:** Why not try writing your own emag-style article? This could be about one of your GCSE tets or something completely different; a novel that you have enjoyed, a poem or short story that you have explored in the previous tasks or a broader literary topic.

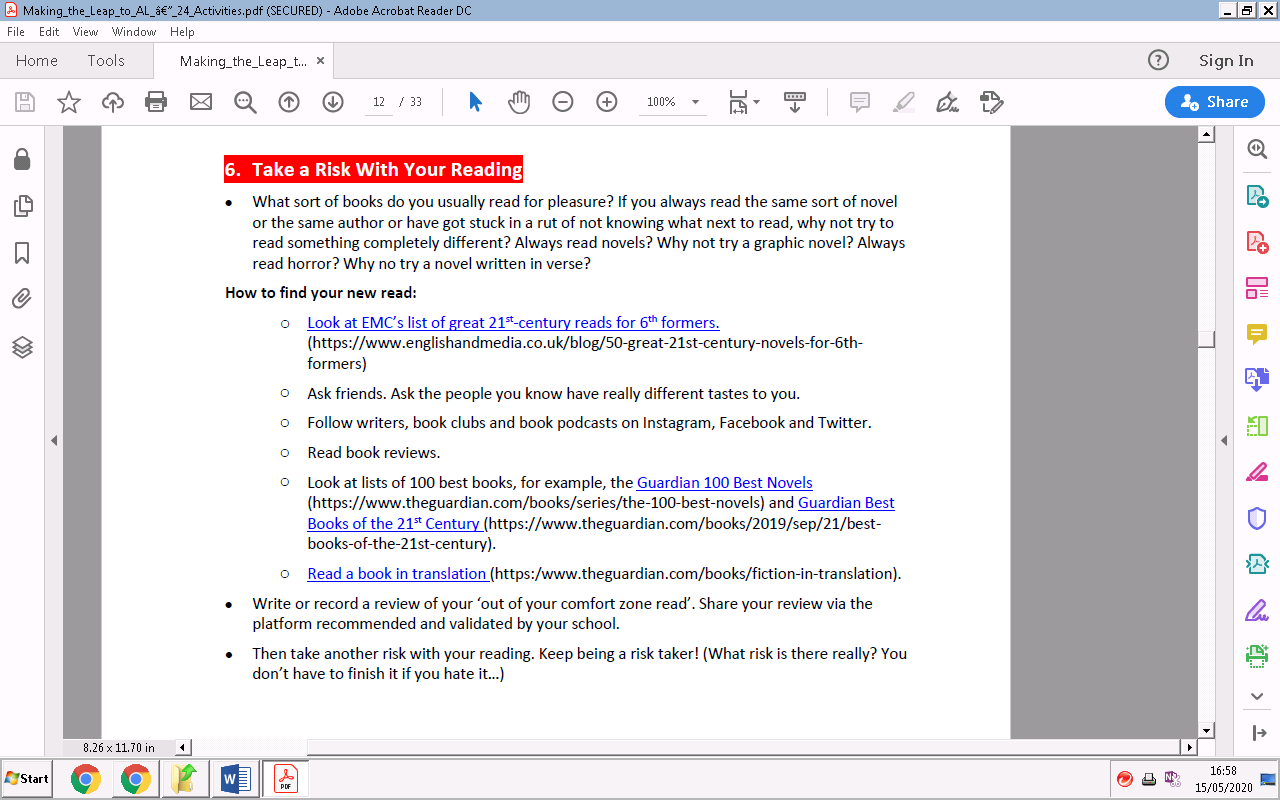
Another area to explore on the English and Media Centre wesite is the video clips area.

* <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing>
* On this page you will find short discussions on a wide range of literary texts and topics including: how to read 19th Century novels (and how to read poems), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time,* why George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* continues to be important, Wiliam Blake’s poem ‘London’ (along with a reading of it), the difference between horror and terror, and dialogue in novels.
* Dip into a variety of these clips. Make a note of new ideas that you come across. Has the clip taught you anything new? Has the clip consolidated any knowledge that you already have? Has the clip made you question anything?

1. **Take a Risk With Your Reading**

What sort of books do you usually read for pleasure? We often find ourselves reading the same sort of novel or the same author, but it is important that we sometimes move away from our comfort zone, challenge ourselves and explore a range of genres, writers and texts.

* Chose a new type of book to read (this will take you a few weeks, so don’t leave it until the last minute!).
* Once you have read your new book, write a review (3/4 to 1 page of A4 – typed). This should be informative, but also opinionated. Have a look at examples of book reviews online to help you if you are not sure how to start. [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com) is a good place to start.
* Below are some ways in which you can find a new type of book to read.



**Reading of Core Texts:**

Before you officially start your English Literature A Level course in September, we would like you to read the core texts listed below

Being familiar with the core texts will enable you to dive straight into studying them when the course starts and provide you with your own initial interpretations and reactions to the text.

***‘Frankenstein’ by Mary Shelley***

***and***

***‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ by Margaret Atwood***

**N.B.** When you are buying copies of these texts, make sure that they are a suitable size for annotating.

**Further Wider Reading to Stretch and Challenge You:**

1. **1984 George Orwell**
2. **One Hundred Years of Solitude Gabriel Garcia Marquez**
3. **Frankenstein Mary Shelley**
4. **Wuthering Heights Emily Bronte**
5. **Pride and Prejudice Jane Austen**
6. **Atonement Ian McEwan**
7. **A Thousand Splendid Suns Khaled Hosseini**
8. **Catcher in the Rye JD Salinger**
9. **The Great Gatsby F. Scott Fitzgerald**
10. **The Road Cormac McCarthy**
11. **Dracula Bram Stoker**
12. **Beloved Toni Morrison**
13. **Jane Eyre Charlotte Bronte**
14. **Farenheit 451 Ray Bradbury**
15. **The Drowned World JG Ballard**
16. **Brave New World Aldous Huxley**

**Websites/ resources for extra research and reading:**

* The British Library Website
* English and Media Centre website
  + Username: Beths2020
  + Password: Wednesday
* To truly stretch and challenge yourself before you start your course, dip into some of the books below which are books about books! They are examples of critical theory about literature. Start by reading the opening few paragraphs and then pages before deciding which of the books below intrigues you the most.

