



**AS and A Level
English Language and Literature
Summer Homework**

Name: _____



SUGGESTED READING LIST

Read widely and think critically about what you read. Pursue your own interests in literature, but bear in mind that it is a good idea to read some pre-twentieth century works and poetry as well as contemporary novels. These websites will give you some ideas about what to read. **Read a minimum of one book over the summer** (can be from reading list below or from your choice of good quality fiction) and come prepared to talk about it in September.

www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/offerholders/reading-lists/english.html

www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/

Paradise Lost: www.christs.cam.ac.uk/darknessvisible/

Poetry Society: www.poetrysociety.org.uk/

Literary Review: www.literaryreview.co.uk/

Times Literary Supplement: www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/

Margaret Atwood - The Handmaid's Tale

Carol Ann Duffy – Mean Time or The World's Wife

F Scott Fitzgerald – The Great Gatsby

George Orwell – 1984 or Animal Farm

Tennessee Williams – A Streetcar Named Desire

J.D. Salinger – The Catcher in The Rye

Harper Lee – To Kill a Mockingbird

Aldous Huxley – Brave New World

Alice Walker – The Color Purple

Mary Shelley - Frankenstein

William Golding - Lord of The Flies

Arthur Miller – Death of a Salesman

Sebastian Faulks – Birdsong

DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE: CONVENTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Read the information on dystopian literature.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

- An undesirable, horrifying, or dark vision of society
- Dehumanization and an oppressive environment or government
- Questioning or criticism of society
- Warning to readers about our own society
- Paranoia and suspicion which creates ambiguity about good and evil
- An attempt to achieve a utopian society which goes awry
- An individual rebellion or resistance movement which reacts against the dystopian power structure
- Questioning of technology, science, or an overly rational approach to solving problems of humanity
- Extreme interpretation of laws
- Setting is usually a dark vision of the future, but sometimes the setting is ambiguous or suggestive of an archaic society with barbaric practices and traditions

Types of Dystopian Controls

Most dystopian works present a world in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through one or more of the following types of controls:

- **Corporate control:** One or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. Examples include *Minority Report* and *Running Man*.
- **Bureaucratic control:** Society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. Examples in film include *Brazil*.
- **Technological control:** Society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. Examples include *The Matrix*, *The Terminator*, and *I, Robot*.
- **Philosophical/religious control:** Society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government.

What Makes a Novel Dystopian?

There are a number of general characteristics that can help classify a story as dystopian. These include:

Backstory: Dystopias are often part of a fictional universe, therefore a back story of how this world came to be or how it evolved (or devolved) from our current world is necessary. The back story explains how the shift in control came to occur, with the end result being changed societal norms or a government now run by corporations, totalitarian dictatorships or bureaucracies.

Hero: There are a few different types of hero/protagonist that can occur in dystopian stories. One is the protagonist who intuitively feels something is wrong with society and sets out to change it, believing that it is possible to overthrow the dictatorship, or merely escape from the misery. Often the protagonist's opinion varies significantly from those around him, leading to clashes and linking back to the question asked earlier regarding perception of dystopias.

Another common form of protagonist is the high-standing, accepted hero, who is part of the Utopian perception of the dystopia, but eventually discovers or comes to understand how wrong society has become and either attempts to change it or destroy it.

The dystopian hero helps the audience recognize the negative aspects of the dystopian world through his or her perspective.

Conflict: Often, the hero meets a person who represents the dystopia, possibly the leader of the society. In the conflict, the hero meets and is sometimes helped by a group of people who are also trying to escape or destroy the dystopia. Sometimes they are people who were once part of the dystopia, but were exiled or have escaped, or they have created their own society within the dystopia.

Society: A dystopian society imposes severe social restrictions on community members. Social class is strictly defined and enforced and the intellectuals are repressed. There is a total absence of social groups other than the "state" and independent religion is notable by its absence. There is often hostility towards the family and motherhood in particular.

Climax: In dystopian literature, the story is often unresolved. Often the dystopia is not brought down. The hero may make their individual stand (or with the group discussed above) and often fails, but gives hope to others in the dystopia. Sometimes this climax is the hero's escape from the dystopia. Other times the hero fails to achieve anything and the dystopia continues as before.

SETTINGS: Dystopian depictions are always imaginary. The very purpose of a dystopia is to discuss, not depict contemporary society or at least contemporary mankind in general. Dystopian depictions may borrow features from reality, but the purpose is to debate, criticize, or explore possibilities and probabilities.

Dystopia is not really about tomorrow, but rather about today or sometimes yesterday. Nevertheless, dystopian stories take place in the future in most cases.

THEMES: The leitmotif of dystopias has always been **oppression and rebellion**. The oppressors are usually more or less faceless; the oppressors are almost always much more powerful than the rebels. Consequently, dystopian tales often become studies in survival.

As the citizens of dystopian societies often live in fear, they become paranoid and egoistical, almost like hunted animals. Dystopian citizens experience a profound feeling of being monitored, shadowed, chased, betrayed or manipulated. The factors that trigger this paranoia may be either very evident and explicit or more nuanced and implicit. As a result of this fearful atmosphere, dystopian heroes become dehumanized.

The dehumanization of society may also be connected to the benefits and hazards of technological progress. In Dystopia, the borderline of humanity is often blurred and the very concept of humanity distorted.

AESTHETICS: Dystopian stories frequently take place in landscapes which diminish people, **like large cities with mastodontic architecture or vast wastelands devastated by war and pollution**. Dystopian societies are usually, but far from always, battered and worn-out. They may be colorless or kaleidoscopic, but always visually obtrusive.

For uncertain reasons, dystopian movies often use film noir features like dim rooms, rain wet asphalt, disturbing contrasts, symbolic shadows etc. Much of the action takes place during night in many dystopian stories. Possibly, this reflects the thematic relationship between dystopian fiction and film noir.

Generally speaking, the environment plays an active role in dystopian depictions. The environment is not only a fancy background, but emphasizes the message. A prominent example is **Blade Runner** where there can be no doubt that the USA has become completely commercialized and the world is in a state of terminal decay. Dystopian characters are isolated from the natural world, often being conditioned to fear or reject it.

Imagined Worlds – The Handmaid’s Tale

You will read **‘The Handmaid’s Tale’** by Margaret Atwood. Find out about the author, the novel and the context of the novel. You can choose how you present your research e.g. as an information sheet, a project or as a collage. Be ready to hand in your work at the start of September.

1. Write a definition of DYSTOPIA.
2. Research dystopian novels and make a list.
3. Research dystopian films and make a list.

The thing to remember is that there is nothing new about the society depicted in ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ except the time and place. All of the things I have written about have...been done before, more than once.

It is an imagined account of what happens when not uncommon pronouncements about women are taken to their logical conclusions. History proves that what we have been in the past, could be again.

Margaret Atwood

Your contextual research needs to include:

- Margaret Atwood – her early life, education, career and feminist ideas.
- Historical and cultural events which informed the creation of Atwood’s novel – political change in the 1960s and 1970s (Civil Rights and Women’s Rights movements) and Conservative revival (see notes below) in the 1980s, in particular the rise of evangelism in the USA.
- When the novel was written and where and when it is set.
- Female icons from the 60s, 70s and 80s.
- Popular bands and TV of the 60s, 70s and 80s.

The Conservative Revival – Phyllis Schlafley

On the appropriate role of women... “A Positive Woman cannot defeat a man in a wrestling or boxing match, but she can motivate him, inspire him, encourage him, teach him, restrain him, and reward him, and have power over him that he can never achieve over her with all his muscle”.

On women in the workforce... “[No measure] of career success can compare with the thrill, satisfaction, and fun of having and caring for babies and watching them respond and grow under a mother’s loving care”.

On equal pay... “we want a society in which the average man earns more than the average woman so that his earnings can fulfill his provider role in providing a home and support for his wife who is nurturing and mothering their children”.

and... "Sexual harassment on the job is not a problem for virtuous women, except in the rarest of cases."

Remembered Places – Paris Anthology

In this unit you will learn about the ways in which writers and speakers present narratives about Paris (using the AQA Paris Anthology) and consider why and how people tell stories about places.

Using an extract from the Paris Anthology (provided in the exam paper) you will also produce a re-creative piece and write a critical commentary on your writing.

In preparation you must complete the following tasks:

TASK 1 - Summer Creative Activity:

You are going to create two pages of a scrapbook representative of your experiences of living in Coventry (or any other city or country you have experienced living in)

You can draw, paint, cut out images, use words and phrases, etc to re-create your life experience.

You must also make notes on the following and be able to explain your choices:

- what kind of objects you have used and what they represent? (eg tickets, price labels, scraps of magazines, fabric, wrappers, printed recipes, leaves, etc)
- what images have been used, what they represent and, if relevant, how realistic or stylised are they? (eg photos, drawn pictures, finger prints, arrows, borders, etc)
- what text has been created and how it relate to the images or objects and to the overarching narrative of the discourse? (eg framing, connecting, explaining, providing descriptive or narrative detail, etc)

Your work must be produced on paper i.e. not electronically; it can form a booklet or a collage.

You must be prepared to present your work in September and explain your choices.

TASK 2 – Researching Paris:

Do some detailed research on the following areas:

- The French Revolution
- The 1968 Paris Riots
- Fashion
- French philosophy and philosophers e.g Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir
- Artists and musicians
- Writers
- The history of travelling to Paris
- The cemeteries of Paris
- Tourism in Paris.

You can choose how you present your research e.g. as an information sheet, a project or as a collage; you must use both text and image.

Be ready to hand in your work at the start of September.

Important skills for this unit:

- ☒ Analysis of a writer's intentions
- ☒ Identification and analysis of linguistic, literary and rhetorical devices
- ☒ Comparison of texts
- ☒ Supporting comments with quotation and/or textual references
- ☒ Analysing the impact of social and historical context on the construction and reception of fiction and non-fiction texts
- ☒ Careful crafting of own creative texts
- ☒ High standard of structural organisation and accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation
- ☒ Understanding and criticism of your own work
- ☒ Time management
- ☒ Planning and organisation
- ☒ Love of reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction – you should be developing your analytical skills by reading widely outside of class. At least one text per fortnight in addition to what is studied for lessons
- ☒ Enthusiasm and an enjoyment of English Language and Literature
- ☒ Confidence to contribute to class discussions, debates and teaching and learning