

Revision...

# GCSE English Language GCSE English Literature

Tips for Success!



Handsworth Grange Community Sports College  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

## 1. Know your Exam Board

### AQA

- English Language Unit Code: 8700
- English Literature Unit Code: 8702

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse>

## 2. Learn the Exam BASICS

*Can you answer the following questions?*

- a. How many exams are you doing?
- b. How long is each exam?
- c. How many questions do you need to answer on each exam?
- d. How many marks is each question worth?
- e. How long do you need to spend on each question?
- f. What skills do you need to demonstrate in each question?

*If not, speak with your English teacher*

## 3. READ, READ and READ SOME MORE!

- ✓ Read and re-read the Literature texts you need to know for the Literature Exams.
- ✓ Read newspaper articles (online is fine!) – your Language Exam will feature extracts from newspaper articles - the more familiar you are with the style, the easier you will find the exam.
- ✓ Look up any words you don't understand as you read. (This will develop your understanding but, more significantly, your vocabulary!)
- ✓ Read texts that challenge you. Use the reading list in this guide to help you pick a challenging text. You may not finish it, but the more you try the easier you will find it. Your Language Exams will feature extracts from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literature. Some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century texts are challenging, so the more exposure you have to them, the easier you will find the exam.

#### **4. Practise exam responses in TIMED conditions.**

- a) Make sure you know HOW LONG you SHOULD be spending on a question.
- b) When you do your practice questions you MUST make sure you time yourself.
- c) It is no good writing a brilliant answer if it takes you longer than you are allowed in the exam.
- d) Practising in TIMED CONDITIONS will improve your EXAM STAMINA.

#### **5. Use revision guides wisely**

Revision guides are great but not if you just read them.

Use them interactively – make notes / condense ideas into mind maps / challenge yourself by putting quotations on cue cards / colour code themes / revise terminology.

Useful **websites** to help with your revision....

Support with English Language and Literature can be found at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/z33qxsq/resources/5>

Literacy Skills (to help with the SPaG marks!)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic-group/spelling>

An online version of Romeo and Juliet can be found at:

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/romeoscenes.html>

An online version of A Christmas Carol can be found at:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/search/?query=a+christmas+carol>

Extra support with your Literature texts can be found at:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/sparknotes/>

Online newspaper articles can be found at various news websites:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/index.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk>

Challenge yourself by giving one of these 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century classics a go....

# Reading List

## [Emma](#) by Jane Austen (1816)

Jane Austen's Emma is her masterpiece, mixing the sparkle of her early books with a deep sensibility.

## [Frankenstein](#) by Mary Shelley (1818)

Mary Shelley's first novel has been hailed as a masterpiece of horror and the macabre.

## [Jane Eyre](#) by Charlotte Brontë (1847)

Charlotte Brontë's erotic, gothic masterpiece became the sensation of Victorian England.

## [Wuthering Heights](#) by Emily Brontë (1847)

Emily Brontë's windswept masterpiece is notable not just for its wild beauty but for its daring reinvention of the novel form itself.

## [David Copperfield](#) by Charles Dickens (1850)

David Copperfield marked the point at which Dickens became the great entertainer and also laid the foundations for his later, darker masterpieces.

## [The Scarlet Letter](#) by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850)

Nathaniel Hawthorne's astounding book is full of intense symbolism and as haunting as anything by Edgar Allan Poe.

## [The Moonstone](#) by Wilkie Collins (1868)

Wilkie Collins's masterpiece, hailed by many as the greatest English detective novel, is a brilliant marriage of the sensational and the realistic.

## [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) by Mark Twain (1884/5)

Mark Twain's tale of a rebel boy and a runaway slave seeking liberation upon the waters of the Mississippi.

## [Kidnapped](#) by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)

A thrilling adventure story, gripping history and fascinating study of the Scottish character, Kidnapped has lost none of its power.

## [The Sign of Four](#) by Arthur Conan Doyle (1890)

Sherlock Holmes's second outing sees Conan Doyle's brilliant sleuth – and his bluff sidekick Watson – come into their own.

## [The Picture of Dorian Gray](#) by Oscar Wilde (1891)

Wilde's brilliantly allusive moral tale of youth, beauty and corruption was greeted with howls of protest on publication.

## [Jude the Obscure](#) by Thomas Hardy (1895)

Hardy exposed his deepest feelings in this bleak, angry novel and, stung by the hostile response, he never wrote another.

## [The Red Badge of Courage](#) by Stephen Crane (1895)

Stephen Crane's account of a young man's passage to manhood through soldiery is a blueprint for the great American war novel.

## [Dracula](#) by Bram Stoker (1897)

Bram Stoker's classic vampire story was very much of its time but still resonates more than a century later.

## [The Call of the Wild](#) by Jack London (1903)

Jack London's vivid adventures of a pet dog that goes back to nature reveal an extraordinary style and consummate storytelling.

## [The Thirty-Nine Steps](#) by John Buchan (1915)

John Buchan's espionage thriller, with its sparse, contemporary prose, is hard to put down.

## [Mrs Dalloway](#) by Virginia Woolf (1925)

Woolf's great novel makes a day of party preparations the canvas for themes of lost love, life choices and mental illness.

## [The Great Gatsby](#) by F Scott Fitzgerald (1925)

Fitzgerald's jazz age masterpiece has become a tantalising metaphor for the eternal mystery of art.

## [Brave New World](#) by Aldous Huxley (1932)

Aldous Huxley's vision of a future human race controlled by global capitalism is every bit as prescient as Orwell's more famous dystopia.

## [Cold Comfort Farm](#) by Stella Gibbons (1932)

The book for which Gibbons is best remembered was a satire of late-Victorian pastoral fiction but went on to influence many subsequent generations.

## [The Big Sleep](#) by Raymond Chandler (1939)

Raymond Chandler's hardboiled debut brings to life the seedy LA underworld – and Philip Marlowe, the archetypal fictional detective.

## [The Grapes of Wrath](#) by John Steinbeck (1939)

One of the greatest of great American novels, this study of a family torn apart by poverty and desperation in the Great Depression shocked US society.

## [The Heat of the Day](#) by Elizabeth Bowen (1948)

Elizabeth Bowen's 1948 novel perfectly captures the atmosphere of London during the blitz while providing brilliant insights into the human heart.

## [Nineteen Eighty-Four](#) by George Orwell (1949)

George Orwell's dystopian classic cost its author dear but is arguably the best-known novel in English of the 20th century.

## [The Catcher in the Rye](#) by JD Salinger (1951)

JD Salinger's study of teenage rebellion remains one of the most controversial and best-loved American novels of the 20th century.

## [To Kill a Mockingbird](#) by Harper Lee (1960)

Her second novel finally [arrived this summer](#), but Harper Lee's first did enough alone to secure her lasting fame, and remains a truly popular classic.

## [The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie](#) by Muriel Spark (1960)

Short and bittersweet, Muriel Spark's tale of the downfall of a Scottish schoolmistress is a masterpiece of narrative fiction.

## [Catch-22](#) by Joseph Heller (1961)

This acerbic anti-war novel was slow to fire the public imagination, but is rightly regarded as a groundbreaking critique of military madness.

## [The Golden Notebook](#) by Doris Lessing (1962)

Hailed as one of the key texts of the women's movement of the 1960s, this study of a divorced single mother's search for personal and political identity remains a defiant, ambitious tour de force.

## [A Clockwork Orange](#) by Anthony Burgess (1962)

Anthony Burgess's dystopian classic still continues to startle and provoke, refusing to be outshone by Stanley Kubrick's brilliant film adaptation.

## [A Single Man](#) by Christopher Isherwood (1964)

Christopher Isherwood's story of a gay Englishman struggling with bereavement in LA is a work of compressed brilliance.

## [In Cold Blood](#) by Truman Capote (1966)

Truman Capote's non-fiction novel, a true story of bloody murder in rural Kansas, opens a window on the dark underbelly of postwar America.

## [The Bell Jar](#) by Sylvia Plath (1966)

Sylvia Plath's painfully graphic roman à clef, in which a woman struggles with her identity in the face of social pressure, is a key text of Anglo-American feminism.

## [Song of Solomon](#) by Toni Morrison (1977)

The novel with which the Nobel prize-winning author established her name is a kaleidoscopic evocation of the African-American experience in the 20th century.

## [Midnight's Children](#) by Salman Rushdie (1981)

The personal and the historical merge in Salman Rushdie's dazzling, game-changing Indian English novel of a young man born at the very moment of Indian independence.