

**A Level English Language & Literature**

**Lecturer**  
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**Activity 1 -** Dystopian Fantasy – researching the genre

Our current students are studying *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood. This is a dystopian fantasy novel. Do some research into what dystopian fantasy is and make some notes on the typical features of dystopian fantasy.

**Activity 2 -** Analysing a dystopian TV show

Watch [the trailer for Season 1 of the TV show *The Handmaid’s Tale*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVLiDETfx1c) and answer the following:

1. List FIVE features of a dystopian society that are shown in the video.
2. What kind of atmosphere do the programme makers create in this video?
3. Identify at least FIVE methods they use to create this atmosphere. Include at least TWO language techniques in your list, as well as visual and sound techniques.

**Transcript of *The Handmaid’s Tale* Season 1 Trailer**

OFFRED (voiceover): I was asleep before. That’s how we let it happen. When they slaughtered Congress, we didn’t wake up. When they blamed terrorists and suspended the Constitution, we didn’t wake up then, either. Now I’m awake. My name is Offred. I had another name.

EMPLOYER: Ladies, I have to let you go. It’s the law now.

MOIRA: They needed to do it this way – all the bank accounts and jobs all at the same time. Can you imagine the airports, otherwise?

LUKE: Run! Run! Run!

OFFRED: No, please! Please don’t take her! Nooooo!

AUNT: You girls will serve the leaders and their barren wives. You will bear children for them.   
  
OFGLEN: There’s an Eye in your house.  
  
MOIRA: They’ll send you to the Colonies. You’ll be cleaning up toxic waste and then you’ll die.

SERENA-JOY: Tonight is a celebration of Gilead and of what we have achieved.  
  
THE COMMANDER: We only wanted to make the world better.  
  
OFFRED: Better?  
  
THE COMMANDER: “Better” never means “better for everyone”.  
  
OFFRED: I want to keep on living. For her.  
  
AUNT: Remember your scripture: “Blessed are the meek.”

OFFRED: “And blessed are those who suffer for the cause of righteousness.”

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**Frequently asked questions**

**How is this subject assessed?**A Level English Language & Literature is assessed through two exams: paper one is 3hrs and paper two is 2.5hrs. There is also coursework to complete, which enables you to explore your own literary and language interests, as you get to choose the texts you want to investigate!

**How is it different to studying language and literature separately?**You study poetry, novels and plays, just like you would in English Literature, and you also study non-literary texts and linguistic concepts and theories, like you would in English Language. The approach to analysing texts is a bit different, as you combine both your literary and language knowledge to apply to the texts you are studying, for thorough, in-depth evaluation. There is also a creative writing unit to the course, which is not a part of the other English A Levels.

**What trips/guest speakers are there?**There are several extra-curricular opportunities. In recent years we have had writers as guest speakers, theatre trips, and a residential to Paris, as one of the units is about writings on Paris.

**What other subjects does A Level English Language & Literature go with?**It is a versatile subject that compliments many other areas of study, such as: History, Psychology, Sociology, Religious Studies, Law, Politics, Drama, Art, Media Studies, and more. Many science students also study an English A Level to give them a well-rounded skills profile.

**Recommended reading**

**Websites/podcasts – reliable sources of information:**

* <https://www.bl.uk/>
* <https://lithub.com>
* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/> - good source of information about poets and poetry (including Carol Ann Duffy, whom we study)
* <https://poetrysociety.org.uk/> - further resources on Duffy, poets and poetry
* <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/> - information about their productions (including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which we study) and now offering a streaming service
* *Something Rhymes with Purple* – engaging podcast about the English language

**Literary reading to inspire you**

The more widely you read, the better you will understand literature and language. What are your reading passions?

* <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/17/the-100-best-novels-written-in-english-the-full-list> - for recommended literature spanning the literary periods
* <https://www.waterstones.com/blog/21st-century-classics-fiction> - for more recent, future classics

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/21/best-books-of-the-21st-century> - for a list of critically acclaimed fiction and non-fiction books