

# Year 12 English Literature Student Guide

## Unit 1 Drama

The course gets off to an explosive start with Tennessee Williams' tragedy, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a play which explores what happens when clashing forces vie for power. The play oozes conflict - between the genders, between the ways of the north and the south in the USA, between family members - and, as in theatre, as in life, the taboo topics of sex and death lurk closely beneath the surface tension. Set in steamy New Orleans the tension slowly builds to a disturbing climax...



## Unit 2 Prose: Crime Fiction

The darkness which lies within us is further examined through a close study of the sensationalist nineteenth century novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon. The controversial protagonist elicits lots of debate: is she a ruthless killer or a victim of society who deserves our empathy? Aspects of this novel are then compared with the twentieth century true crime novel *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote. Again, the debate widens to explore controversial issues such as child poverty and capital punishment. Your knowledge of both Victorian society and life in America in the 1960s will be extended too.



### Unit 3 Poetry

The poetry studied in Year 12 has all been written this century by living poets who occasionally contribute to Instagram or perform on YouTube. Their concerns are current ones (for example, the immigrant experience, female infanticide, the role that technology plays in our lives) and their writing provokes thought and engages the emotions.



### Unit 4 Coursework

This is where you have the chance to show some independence and reveal what you can do when you read and think on your own. You will be supported by a member of staff, but you can select one of your own texts to analyse and evaluate. You will write comparatively and explore the significance of the contexts of the texts too.

#### How can I help myself and maximise my chances of doing well?

- Read as widely as possible; become an avid and diverse reader. Explore nineteenth century fiction (by canonical writers such as Dickens and Austen), twentieth century classics (by writers such as George Orwell and Virginia Woolf) and contemporary fiction (what is currently top of the bestseller lists?).
- Go to the theatre, whether in London, Cambridge or more locally in Hertford or Harlow. Watch film versions of major dramas, such as Marlon Brando's performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
- Explore YouTube clips of modern poets in performance and in conversation. Follow your favourites on Twitter and Instagram.
- Listen to Arts Podcasts, several of which can be found on the BBC Sounds app such as Front Row or In Our Time.

Read copies of Emagazine online, the literary publication intended for A level literature students. Follow this link:

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

and with the username charles and password dickens, a world of marvels awaits.

- Read the Arts pages of quality newspapers such as The Guardian, Times or Telegraph which you can find online or in the school library.

Explore the British Library website, Discovering Literature:

<https://www.bl.uk/discovering-literature>

- Write frequently too. Use the Notes app on your phone or treat yourself to some fancy stationery. Record your thoughts on your reading material. What did you enjoy? Find challenging? Why?

- Remember - reading and writing are skills and, like all skills, you need to practise them in order to improve.
- Good luck and enjoy!

