

A level English Enrichment

English A level resources and links

On this page you will find links to a range of resources to help you to find out more about English, carry out your own research and enjoy the world of literature. Scroll down for information about wider reading, online courses, writing competitions and ideas for literary days out. You can also find out about the support, lectures, podcasts and other opportunities available for A level students at some universities.

What can I do at home?

Read a local or broadsheet newspaper – The Hertfordshire Mercury, The Times, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph or The Financial Times, if you have any of these at home. Remember the school library has newspapers and magazines too.

Widen your reading – borrow challenging novels, biographies etc. from the school or local library to try new genres and authors. Ask the librarians or your English teachers for advice or use some of the sites below to help you to branch out and choose new reading material.

Talk about what you are reading – try reading the same book as a friend or family member so that you can discuss your opinions.

Watch programmes about literature and the arts – BBC4, BBC2 and Sky Arts are useful places to begin. BBC2 broadcasts Front Row each week and there are often documentaries about writers on BBC4. Hearing critics talk about the arts can really help to widen your critical vocabulary and powers of analysis and to develop a fluent writing style.

Listen to radio programmes about literature and the arts to keep up to date with books, plays and poetry – BBC Radio 4 broadcasts an arts magazine programme, Front Row, every weeknight and Saturday Review on Saturday evenings. Open Book and A Good Read focus on books and publishing. Poetry Please introduces you to a wide range of poems and poets.

Go to the theatre:

If it is possible for you to do so, going to see a play in the theatre is a wonderful experience and the best way to learn about the impact of live drama on an audience. Look at the listings at your local theatre or try London theatres. They can be expensive but many offer some cheaper tickets, especially for young people. Shakespeare's Globe on the South Bank in London charges only five pounds to stand up in the yard and some of the seats are reasonably priced if you book early. The National Theatre, also on the South Bank, often has tickets at fifteen pounds if you book early. The new Bridge Theatre at London Bridge is committed to offering cheap tickets to young people and has a great opening season programme.

The National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and some other companies now broadcast productions to cinemas, including Hertford Theatre, Broxbourne Civic Hall, Welwyn cinema and some branches of Odeon, Cineworld and Vue. This is a great opportunity to see world-class productions at a reduced

price and often with a better view of the stage! The broadcasts often include interviews with the cast and creative team and introductions to the play to help you to find out more.

<http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/in-cinemas>

Links:

Explore the links below to find out more about writers and literature at your own pace.

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/

Bristol University offers these tutorials on common grammar errors and improving your writing style.

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

The Guardian newspaper has a section for books on its website that is well regarded for its up-to-date reviews, news and comment. The newspaper also produces podcasts on books which you can find on this site.

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

The British Library is near King's Cross station in London and has regular temporary exhibitions (Harry Potter in 2017-18) and a free permanent gallery where you can see original manuscripts from Dickens and Bronte as well as Jane Austen's writing desk and Shakespeare's First Folio.

The website has some excellent resources on its Discovering Literature microsite, including videos, digital documents and information on topics such as Charlotte Bronte's early writing, crime in Victorian literature, Juliet's language and An Inspector Calls. The site is divided into 20th Century, Victorians and Romantics and Shakespeare.

<http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/index.html>

The Victorian Web is a useful site for background information on a variety of issues in Victorian society – useful for studying the nineteenth century novel.

<https://www.poetryarchive.org>

The Poetry Archive is a live site supported by the British Council, containing recordings of poets reading their own work. It's a great place to find new poems and research their writers.

Literature festivals are a great way to see your favourite writers and find out about current trends in fiction and criticism. This site (click on Calendar or A-Z at the top) lists some of the most well-known festivals. The Cambridge Festival of Ideas and Cambridge WordFest is reasonably close to home but the most famous festivals are at Hay-on-Wye, Cheltenham and Edinburgh. Some festivals have websites where they post videos of author interviews.

<http://www.literaryfestivals.co.uk>

<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/units/faculty-english-language-and-literature>

The University of Oxford publishes some lectures series as audio podcasts. Of particular interest for A level might be the lectures on Shakespeare, Literature and Form and Poetry with Simon Armitage.

<https://readdurhamenglish.wordpress.com>

Durham University English Department publishes this site with audio recordings and blog posts related to English Literature lectures from their undergraduate course.

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

BBC Arts keeps you up to date with the latest TV and radio programmes and news on literature, drama and film. The microsite <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0374bx8> is focused specifically on books.

https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/categories/literature-courses?all_courses=1

FutureLearn is a learning platform where universities and other education institutions run online courses for anyone aged 13 and over. The site covers all sorts of topics, including Literature, and each course provides a programme of videos and learning activities for a set number of weeks. Recent courses have included general introductions to Shakespeare as well as specialist courses on Hamlet, Othello and Much Ado About Nothing. All you need to do is register and sign up. The courses run for a specific period but they tend to cycle round again so don't worry if you miss the one you're interested in. You can interact with other learners using the comments tools if you would like to (take care with what/how you post online if you decide to do this) or just complete the learning without posting your ideas.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjz6LNDQOWaCkQegAHxyo2g>

RSC Education YouTube channel – videos about specific plays but also about Shakespeare's language and staging.

<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com>

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre is a replica of the original Globe on Bankside in London. Their website has a wealth of information about the plays, original staging, actor and director insights etc. Look on their education pages for interviews and fact sheets about a range of different aspects of Shakespeare's works.

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare/>

The Royal Shakespeare Company is dedicated to producing Shakespeare's plays and continuing to make them enjoyable and accessible for modern day audiences. Their website includes lots of information about his life and works as well as videos and further details about recent productions.

Text Detectives and Shakespeare Unplugged are useful if you want to find out more about how actors and directors stage the plays:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/education/teacher-resources/bbc-live-lessons>

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/>

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust looks after the houses associated with his life in Stratford-upon-Avon. They also produce educational resources including a blog, videos and a podcast about different aspects of his life and works.

<https://www.bronte.org.uk/the-brontes-and-haworth>

The Bronte Parsonage Museum is the house (now open to the public) in Yorkshire in which Charlotte Bronte and her family lived. The website includes resources on her life and works.

<https://dickensmuseum.com>

The Dickens House Museum is near King's Cross Station in London and is well worth a visit. Their website includes information on his life and works.

University academic support and opportunities:

Many universities offer lectures, subject taster days and summer schools for Sixth Form students. Most are likely to be free of charge. You don't have to be considering applying to that particular university in order to attend. Explore some of the opportunities on the pages below:

University College, London

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/widening-participation/activities>

King's College, London

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/visit/next-steps-full.aspx>

University of London

<http://www.london.ac.uk/5197.html>

Hertfordshire

http://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/events?mode=results¤t_result_page=2&results_per_page=5

Oxford

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/visiting-and-outreach/outreach-events?wssl=1>

Cambridge

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events>

Writing competitions – some of these are for fiction and some for essays. Most are annual events so if a page gives a closing date in the past, check back later for next year's deadlines.

<http://www.newn.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduates/newnham-essay-prizes/>

Newnham College, an all-female college at the University of Cambridge offers a prize each year for an essay by a female Year 12 student inspired by Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

<https://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/poetry-opportunities/keats-shelley-memorial-association-essay-prize/>

Keats-Shelley prize for an essay by a 16-18 year-old on the Romantic poets.

<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/english-and-creative-writing/undergraduate/lancaster-writing-award/>

Lancaster University runs a competition with categories in fiction, criticism, script-writing and poetry.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/new-partners-short-story-awards#heading-the-bbc-national-short-story-award-with-cambridge-university-nssa>

The BBC has a short story award for adults and a separate one for young people 14-18. There is also now a Young Critic Award aimed at 16-18 year-olds, in association with the University of Cambridge.

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/competitions/competitions-forward-emagazine-student-critics-competition/>

Forward Poetry Student Critic competition for 14-19 year olds.

<http://www.walterscottprize.co.uk/young-walter-scott-prize/>

This prize is yearly and is dedicated to historical fiction.