

**English Literature**

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| **Key skills developed in this work:*** English Literature terminology
* Analytical skills
* Reading and Retrieval skills

**Key texts you will study at AS Level:*** *‘The Tempest’* By William Shakespeare
* *Selected poems from ‘Ariel’* (1965) Sylvia Plath
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| **Expectations of English Literature students:****1. Key Terms to Understand and Analyse**Students taking AS Level English Literature will be expected to master various literary terms and concepts. These terms are essential to analysing and interpreting the texts studied.2. **Shakespearean Text Expectations**For AS Level students, a key component of the syllabus includes studying a Shakespearean text. Some important expectations:* **Close Reading**: Students will need to engage deeply with the text, paying attention to language, structure, and form.
* **Context**: Understanding the historical, cultural, and social context of the time when Shakespeare wrote the play will be crucial to interpreting the text.
* **Character Analysis**: Students should be able to analyse key characters, their motivations, development, and relationships with others.
* **Language**: Recognizing the significance of Shakespeare's use of language, such as puns, metaphors, and iambic pentameter.

**3. Poetry Analysis: Sylvia Plath's Works**In studying a collection of poems by **Sylvia Plath**, students will be expected to:* **Identify Key Poetic Terms**
* **Tone and Mood**: Analyzing how Plath’s tone shifts throughout her poems (e.g., from despair to defiance) and the mood created for the reader.
* **Themes**: Exploring major themes in Plath's poetry such as mental health, identity, death, and feminist themes.
* **Structure**: Paying attention to how the form and structure of the poem contribute to its meaning.

4. **Key Expectations for Analysis*** **Critical Thinking**: Students must engage in critical analysis, going beyond surface-level interpretation.
* **Textual Evidence**: All analysis should be supported by direct quotes or references from the text.
* **Synthesis**: Students should be able to synthesize various literary elements (language, structure, form) and discuss how they work together to convey the author’s meaning.
* **Comparative Skills**: In some instances, students may be asked to compare texts or different sections of a text, making connections between themes, characters, or literary techniques.
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| **Website links:*** **Copy of ‘The Tempest’** [**2010 TEMPEST**](https://www.shakespearefreelibrary.com/uploads/4/2/1/6/4216153/2010_cbury_tempest.pdf)
* [**Sylvia Plath | The Poetry Foundation**](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sylvia-plath)
* [**MASSOLIT – Short video lectures from the world's best academics**](https://massolit.io/)
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| **Appropriate additional reading:*** “The Bell Jar” By Sylvia Plath
* "The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s Last Plays" edited by Russell Fraser
* “The Tempest” by William Shakespeare
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| **Tasks to complete:*** Students should familiarise themselves with the key terminology provided on the attached worksheet.
* Students should conduct background research on the key authors: William Shakespeare and Sylvia Plath.
* Students should read Sylvia Plath’s collection of poems provided on the attached worksheet and identify key techniques from the terminology list. They should then comment on the effects of these techniques, considering questions like: Why did the writer choose this technique? What is its impact?
* Students should watch the YouTube series on A-Level English Literature: [A' Level English Literature: All Exam Boards - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqGFsWf-P-cB1f_tITHsue8wXQU8goGt_)
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**Key Terminology:**

* Simile – comparing something using like or as. *He was as fast as a cheetah.*
* Metaphor – saying something is something else; a direct comparison, not meant literally. i.e. *He was a cheetah on the racetrack.*
* Extended Metaphor – exactly the same as a normal metaphor, but you’ll see the same idea repeating over multiple sentences, lines, paragraphs (or stanzas). *Think: You’re a lion. When you speak, you roar. You’re the king of the jungle, the bravest of the beasts.*
* Personification – (or *Anthropomorphism*), applying human characteristics to objects, Gods or things. i.e. *the angry sea.*(Zoomorphism is when you give humans (or other things!) animal features, i.e. *he growled with wolfish hunger*).
* Pathetic fallacy – when human characteristicsc are applied to things (often found in nature), i.e. the “angry sky” or “the wind whispered through the trees”. Usually done to set the tone or reflect the mood of characters.
* Alliteration – when the first letter of a word is repeated more than once. *Alice always alliterates.*
* Assonance – repeating vowel sounds (not necessarily rhyming though) – *the house is out-rowed with the louts and crows*
* Anecdote – a short story from personal experience. *Like that time you missed the bus, got soaked in the rain, then had to cycle all the way to school*. *You know?*
* Irony – Something contrary to what you might expect. *Alanis Morissette knows it (or not, as the case may be).*
* Onomatopoeia – words that sound like what they are. Bang, clap, thud….etc.
* Sibilance – a repeated ‘s’ sound – either at the start, or in the middle of words (N.B. ‘c’ can sometimes sound like an s!)
* Colloquial Languange – informal or slang words and phrases (i.e. just how you’d speak everyday!). Think *wanna*rather than “want to”.
* **Connotation** – Like word associations… think of a lovely word cloud, hovering over you.
* **Semantic field** – When a group of words all link to one overall theme.
* **Sensory Detail** – Sight, sound, taste, touch, smell.
* **Euphemism** – A polite way of saying something often taboo or controversial.
* **Double entendre** – When a word or phrase has two meanings, one of which is often rude. Shakespeare had loads of them!
* **Idiom** – commonly used phrases or metaphors. i.e. *It’s raining cats and dogs.*
* **Emotive Language** – Powerful describing words or adjectives
* **Figurative Language** – the creative use of words or phrases to create a special meaning, that isn’t *literally*what they say.
* **Evocative Verbs** – A doing word which sounds particularly active. *The cat slinked, crawled, darted – rather than just walked.*
* **Allusion** – making reference to people, places, events, literary work, myths, or works of art…. *i.e. he alluded to the Van Gogh painting on the wall.*
* **Allegory** – A type of writing in which the settings, characters, and events stand for other, often larger ideas. i.e. *Animal Farm*about capitalism vs. communism
* **Didactic** – Intended to teach, instruct, or have a moral lesson for the reader. Think about Aesop’s Fables…. The tortoise and the Hare?
* **Triadic listing** – Triples.
* **Asyndetic listing** – Separation with commas.
* **Syndetic listing** – Separation with connectives.
* **Hypophora**– When the speaker asks a question and then answers it themselves.
* **Rhetorical question** – A question not expected to be answered.
* **Interrogative sentence** – Just a question really…
* **Imperative sentence** – A sentence that commands or demands. *Do this, buy that.*
* **Exclamatory sentence** – A sentence that exclaims and ends with an exclamation mark!!
* **Motifs**– a recurring subject, image, theme or idea within a text (this could be articles, poetry, novels… you name it!).
* **Oxymoron** – Two opposites together. *Loving hate, brawling love, Sweet sorrow….*
* **Juxtaposition** – When two or more ideas are contrasted *near* (not necessarily next to) each other.
* **Antithesis** – something (or someone) that’s the direct opposite of something (or someone) else.
* **Paradox** – A contradiction. *You can
have paradoxical language – it just doesn’t quite make sense!*

**Sylvia Plath Poems:**

**"Lady Lazarus"**

* This is one of Plath’s most famous and powerful poems. It deals with themes of death, resurrection, and personal struggle. The poem reflects Plath’s own experiences with mental illness and suicide attempts, making it an important precursor to *Ariel*.

**Lady Lazarus**

**By Sylvia Plath**

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it——

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin

O my enemy.

Do I terrify?——

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

The sour breath

Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh

The grave cave ate will be

At home on me

And I a smiling woman.

I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.

What a trash

To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands

My knees.

I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.

The first time it happened I was ten.

It was an accident.

The second time I meant

To last it out and not come back at all.

I rocked shut

As a seashell.

They had to call and call

And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I’ve a call.

It’s easy enough to do it in a cell.

It’s easy enough to do it and stay put.

It’s the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

‘A miracle!’

That knocks me out.

There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge

For the hearing of my heart——

It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge

For a word or a touch

Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.

So, so, Herr Doktor.

So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,

I am your valuable,

The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.

I turn and burn.

Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash—

You poke and stir.

Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——

A cake of soap,

A wedding ring,

A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

**"The Colossus"**

In this poem, Plath uses mythology and the metaphor of a crumbling statue to explore themes of loss, grief, and personal destruction. It is one of her earlier poems but exhibits many of the themes and obsessions that are present in Ariel.

**The Colossus**

**By Sylvia Plath**

I shall never get you put together entirely,

Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.

Mule-bray, pig-grunt and bawdy cackles

Proceed from your great lips.

It’s worse than a barnyard.

Perhaps you consider yourself an oracle,

Mouthpiece of the dead, or of some god or other.

Thirty years now I have labored

To dredge the silt from your throat.

I am none the wiser.

Scaling little ladders with glue pots and pails of lysol

I crawl like an ant in mourning

Over the weedy acres of your brow

To mend the immense skull plates and clear

The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.

A blue sky out of the Oresteia

Arches above us. O father, all by yourself

You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.

I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress.

Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered

In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.

It would take more than a lightning-stroke

To create such a ruin.

Nights, I squat in the cornucopia

Of your left ear, out of the wind,

Counting the red stars and those of plum-color.

The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.

My hours are married to shadow.

No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel

On the blank stones of the landing.

**"The Bee Meeting"**

* This poem is symbolic of **self-discovery**, as the speaker attempts to find a sense of control and identity within a mysterious and seemingly chaotic situation. It also plays with themes of **nature** and **ritual**.

[The Bee Meeting](https://allpoetry.com/The-Bee-Meeting)

By Sylvia Plath

Who are these people at the bridge to meet me? They are the villagers——
The rector, the midwife, the sexton, the agent for bees.
In my sleeveless summery dress I have no protection,
And they are all gloved and covered, why did nobody tell me?
They are smiling and taking out veils tacked to ancient hats.

I am nude as a chicken neck, does nobody love me?
Yes, here is the secretary of bees with her white shop smock,
Buttoning the cuffs at my wrists and the slit from my neck to my knees.
Now I am milkweed silk, the bees will not notice.
They will not smell my fear, my fear, my fear.

Which is the rector now, is it that man in black?
Which is the midwife, is that her blue coat?
Everybody is nodding a square black head, they are knights in visors,
Breastplates of cheesecloth knotted under the armpits.
Their smiles and their voces are changing. I am led through a beanfield.

Strips of tinfoil winking like people,
Feather dusters fanning their hands in a sea of bean flowers,
Creamy bean flowers with black eyes and leaves like bored hearts.
Is it blood clots the tendrils are dragging up that string?
No, no, it is scarlet flowers that will one day be edible.

Now they are giving me a fashionable white straw Italian hat
And a black veil that molds to my face, they are making me one of them.
They are leading me to the shorn grove, the circle of hives.
Is it the hawthorn that smells so sick?
The barren body of hawthon, etherizing its children.

Is it some operation that is taking place?
It is the surgeon my neighbors are waiting for,
This apparition in a green helmet,
Shining gloves and white suit.
Is it the butcher, the grocer, the postman, someone I know?

I cannot run, I am rooted, and the gorse hurts me
With its yellow purses, its spiky armory.
I could not run without having to run forever.
The white hive is snug as a virgin,
Sealing off her brood cells, her honey, and quietly humming.

Smoke rolls and scarves in the grove.
The mind of the hive thinks this is the end of everything.
Here they come, the outriders, on their hysterical elastics.
If I stand very still, they will think I am cow-parsley,
A gullible head untouched by their animosity,

Not even nodding, a personage in a hedgerow.
The villagers open the chambers, they are hunting the queen.
Is she hiding, is she eating honey? She is very clever.
She is old, old, old, she must live another year, and she knows it.
While in their fingerjoint cells the new virgins

Dream of a duel they will win inevitably,
A curtain of wax dividing them from the bride flight,
The upflight of the murderess into a heaven that loves her.
The villagers are moving the virgins, there will be no killing.
The old queen does not show herself, is she so ungrateful?

I am exhausted, I am exhausted ——
Pillar of white in a blackout of knives.
I am the magician's girl who does not flinch.
The villagers are untying their disguises, they are shaking hands.
Whose is that long white box in the grove, what have they accomplished, why am I cold.