



St Benedict's
Sixth Form

English Combined TRANSITION PACK



Making the Leap:

Moving from GCSE to A level study



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Course: A Level Language and Literature (EMC)

Exam Board: OCR

Specification Code: H474

Reading widely and developing research skills are essential to your success at A level. Begin with the suggestions below

BOOKS

Fiction:

Charlotte Brontë: Jane Eyre
F Scott Fitzgerald: The Great Gatsby
Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart
Arundhati Roy: The God of Small Things
Ian McEwan: Atonement
Jhumpa Lahiri: The Namesake

Non Fiction

George Orwell: Down and Out in Paris and London
Jenny Diski: Skating to Antarctica
Alexander Masters: Stuart A Life Backward*
Allie Brosh: Hyperbole and a Half*

Bill Bryson: The Lost Continent
Anon: I am The Secret Footballer*
Anna Funder: Stasiland*
Jeannette Winterson: Why Be Happy When You Could be Normal?*Stephen Grosz: The Examined Life*
Solomon Northrop: Twelve Years a Slave
Truman Capote: In Cold Blood
Xinran: What the Chinese Don't Eat*

Poetry

William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience
Seamus Heaney: Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996
Carol Ann Duffy: Rapture
Jacob Sam-La Rose: Breaking Silence
Evan Boland: New Collected Poems

Drama

Shakespeare: Othello
Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest
Tennessee Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire
Brian Friel: Translations
Timberlake Wertenbaker: Our Country's Good
Jez Butterworth: Jerusalem



St Benedict's Sixth Form

WEBSITES	<p>English Edu Sites: https://english.edusites.co.uk/category/c/ocr-a-level</p> <p>OCR website for Language and Literature for the specification and sample essays: https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/english-language-and-literature-emc-h074-h474-from-2015/specification-at-a-glance/</p> <p>Seneca Learning: https://senecalearning.com/en-GB/blog/a-level-english-literature-revision/</p>
TV/YOUTUBE	<p>National Theatre Live: a brilliant collection of live productions of iconic plays, available on YOUTUBE here: https://bit.ly/Uc9Qzu</p>
SOCIAL MEDIA	<p>A blog to explore the linguistics side of the course http://englishlangsfx.blogspot.com/</p>
Magazines	<p>The emagazine and archive, also including video clips on set texts and language analysis available here: https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/</p> <p>The Guardian Opinion for Non Fiction: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree</p>

Baseline Assessment

During the week beginning 27th September, an assessment will be undertaken to consider your suitability for the course. The assessment will comprise:

- A review of summer work including your two transition tasks.
- Assessment of a preliminary work that you will produce in the first three weeks.



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Task 1

An Introduction to Narrative

Exploring extracts

The extracts which follow the questions and the task below are all taken from narrative texts. Complete the following questions and then the transition task based on your reading of the extracts:

Preparation:

Read the extracts and decide which appeals to you the most. Which would you want to continue reading – and why?

Each extract is taken from the very beginning of the novel.

Now you know this, look again at the extracts and annotate each text focusing on the different ways in which the authors have chosen to begin their novel. You could use the prompts below to focus your annotations:

- The type of narrative it seems to be from
- The narrator and narrative voice
- What, if anything, you can tell about the kind of narrative this is going to be
- Structure: does it seem to begin at the start of the story? at the end? does it begin with a frame in which the story is introduced?
- The way it is written: style and narrative techniques such as word groups, imagery, syntax (word order, sentence type and length), balance of description, narration, dialogue.
- Whether it draws you in and makes you want to read on?

Now you have annotated the extracts use your notes to complete Transition Task 1:



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Transition Task One

Choose 2 of the extracts which interest you the most and compare the ways the authors have chosen to begin their texts.

Advice

- You need to write at least 500 words
- You should have a brief introduction, 3-5 detailed paragraphs and a brief conclusion
- Use your annotations to create your detailed paragraphs comparing your chosen extracts
- You could use some / all the prompts below to help structure your detailed comparative paragraphs

Prompts

- a) Compare the use of narrative voice, (the viewpoint or perspective of the narrator)
- b) Compare the structural development of the extracts: does it begin at the beginning of events, part way through or at the end
Compare the use of repetition, parallels, oppositions, contrasts
- c) Compare the use of tenses, what effect does this have on you as the reader?
- d) Compare the tone and register (poetic, conversational, informal, formal etc)
- e) Compare the sentence types, structure and length and their impact on the reader
- f) Compare the balance of dialogue, plot narration, reflection and description
- g) Compare the lexical choices (groups, contrasts, kinds)
- h) Compare the use of figurative language, symbols and motifs, metaphor, similes
- i) Compare the use of generic conventions, romance, horror/gothic, adventure, historical, autobiographical

The six extracts follow on the next two pages



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Exploring narrative writing through reading

Extract One- Ian McEwan: Atonement

THE PLAY – for which Briony had designed the posters, programs and tickets, constructed the sales booth out of a folding screen tipped on its side, and lined the collection box in red crêpe paper – was written by her in a two-day tempest of composition, causing her to miss a breakfast and a lunch. When the preparations were complete, she had nothing to do but contemplate her finished draft and wait for the appearance of her cousins from the distant north. There would be time for only one day of rehearsal before her brother arrived. At some moments chilling, at others desperately sad, the play told a tale of the heart whose message, conveyed in a rhyming prologue, was that love which did not build a foundation on good sense was doomed. The reckless passion of the heroine, Arabella, for a wicked foreign count is punished by ill fortune when she contracts cholera during an impetuous dash toward a seaside town with her intended. Deserted by him and nearly everybody else, bed-bound in a garret, she discovers in herself a sense of humour. Fortune presents her a second chance in the form of an impoverished doctor—in fact, a prince in disguise who has elected to work among the needy. Healed by him, Arabella chooses judiciously this time, and is rewarded by reconciliation with her family and a wedding with the medical prince on “a windy sunlit day in spring.”

Extract Two- F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great Gatsby

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

'Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.'

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought – frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Extract 3 Charlotte Bronte: Jane Eyre

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further out-door exercise was now out of the question.

I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed.

Extract 4 Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat. That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan. He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their out-houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father.

Extract 5 Jhumpa Lahiri: The Namesake

1968

On a sticky August evening two weeks before her due date, Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment, combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix. Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones. Even now that there is barely space inside her, it is the one thing she craves. Tasting from a cupped palm, she frowns; as usual, there's something missing. She stares blankly at the pegboard behind the countertop where her cooking utensils hang, all slightly coated with grease. She wipes sweat from her face with the free end of her sari. Her swollen feet ache against speckled gray linoleum. Her pelvis aches from the baby's weight. She opens a cupboard, the shelves lined with a grimy yellow-and-white-checked paper she's been meaning to replace, and reaches for another onion, frowning again as she pulls at its crisp magenta skin. A curious warmth floods her abdomen, followed by a tightening so severe she doubles over, gasping without sound, dropping the onion with a thud on the floor.



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Extract Six Arundhati Roy: The God of Small Things

Paradise Pickles & Preserves

May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun.

The nights are clear, but suffused with sloth and sullen expectation.

But by early June the southwest monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play with. The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn mossgreen. Pepper vines snake up electric poles. Wild creepers burst through laterite banks and spill across the flooded roads. Boats ply in the bazaars. And small fish appear in the puddles that fill the PWD potholes on the highways.

Task 2

Narrative – Writing as a Reader

You need to complete all the preparation activities and questions in order to be ready to complete Transition Task Two. It links to the work you have done for Transition Task One and you will need to refer back to the extracts.

1. Transformational writing experiments on your set text

Question 1 - Rewriting

Choose one of the six extracts from Task 1. Re-write it, experimenting with **one** of the following:

- Change the narrative voice (e.g. from 1st to 3rd person)
- Introduce dialogue, where there is none, or remove dialogue to tell more of it in the narrative voice
- Make a significant change to the prose style from what you find in the original (e.g. more or less poetic, more or less pared back, more or less complex syntax, more or less literary lexis).
- Re-order the material in the paragraphs, to bring some things forward and put others later (experimenting to see what happens if you foreground certain things or tell things in a different order).



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Question 2 Analysing

Think about the impact of these changes you have made in your rewriting and what it tells you about the narrative style of your text. Write a brief paragraph summarising the main points you notice.

Question 3 Writing a story outline

Come up with a story outline, of the kind that you are likely to be presented with in the exam This should:

- Consist of 6 – 8 numbered points and give only the bare bones of the story, in chronological order, without any narrative shaping, or decisions about voice, point of view, chronology, prose style or other aspects of narrative technique.
- You could make up a storyline from scratch, or use a legend, myth, bible story, fairy tale, film storyline or other well-known story.
- Your storyline could have elements of a genre, such as thriller (for instance involving a chase, or a murder), or it could be quite unclear from what happens what genre it could be.

Here are two examples to give you an idea

Story Outline, Example 1:

1. A student sets off to walk to his or her new sixth form college on his/her first day
2. A car nearly runs him/her over on a zebra crossing and drives on.
3. Further on, the car is held at traffic lights.
4. A row erupts between the student and the driver.
5. The student continues on to college and sees the same car parked outside the college.
6. The student walks into the first lesson to find that his/her English teacher is the driver of the car.

OR,

Story Outline, Example 2:

1. A powerful king wanted to be the richest man in the world.
2. A god decided to grant the King one wish.
3. The King wished for everything he touched to be turned to gold.
4. The wish came true and he tried out his new powers.
5. His food and drink, and even his daughter, turned to gold.
6. He prayed to the god, begging him to reverse the wish.



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Examples of Writing for Section B of the Exam

These examples below are designed to show the kind of narrative developments students might create in response to a storyline in the exam:

- They are based on two story outlines above.
- The examples are not written by students, so they don't indicate anything about the expected 'standard' of writing, but they do give a flavour of the different narrative choices that might be possible.
- There are many other valid choices that could be made but these help to signal how rich and varied the responses to the tasks might be.
- In each case, the examples give just the first 100-150 words of what would be a 500-word exam answer.
- They are followed by a sample commentary for Example 1 – just the first 125 words of the 250-word commentary that is required, commenting on the whole narrative opening written for Task 1.

Question 4 Annotate

Read the three writing examples of narrative openings below. Annotate each one focusing on the different choices which have been made in each of the openings, drawing on your understanding of narrative technique from the transition pack so far. They are all based on Story Outline 1

Writing Example 1

I'm nursing a great big fat purple bruise, my cheek's swelling up to the size of a pumpkin and I'm cursing the fact that I'm going to turn up on my first day at college looking like an extra from *Casualty*, rather than the suave new A Level student of my imagination. Should I just turn back and go home? No. I don't want to miss my first English lesson and I'd be letting my old mate Danny down. I can't do that. And anyway, there's a good story to be told, with me as hero, and the driver of the black Skoda who tried to knock me over as the poor puny little creep who got the worst of it all and wouldn't be trying it on with anyone else for a long time to come, after the thorough-going pasting I'd given him. etc

Writing Example 2

Mr Morris walked down the corridor and towards his teaching room. He was looking agitated and a little dishevelled. His hands trembled and he could feel a little fluttering in the corner of his eye, the return of a nervous tic that he thought he'd long put past him. This wasn't the kind of start to the term that he had been hoping for, nor the kind of impression he hoped to create with his new class.

It was hard to concentrate on the tasks ahead, his thoughts returning again and again to that moment when he'd wound down his window and started yelling his head off at the tall, gangly youth standing on the zebra crossing etc



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Writing Example 3

That episode at the beginning of my period at Hulveston Sixth Form College was, I see now, a prophetic sign of what was to come. Over the years that have elapsed, I have often found myself wishing that I'd been slower to rush to judgment that day, more willing to look below the surface of things and see things from the perspective of others. Had I been more aware of the dangers of making instant decisions about people, their inner experiences and motivations, and the strange and unexpected ways in which two people's lives can become interwoven, a lot of suffering might have been avoided.

It all started on an ordinary day, at the start of a brand-new phase of my life, my first steps towards adulthood.

Transition Task Two

Write a fresh narrative of your own in response to Story Outline One above, taking your own decisions about narrative technique. Write it as a full 500-word piece.

Advice

- Feel free to make quite different choices from those of the three you have read, for instance telling it from the point of view of another outside observer, or using mainly dialogue, or doing a highly detailed description of the scene, or using more experimental narrative approaches.
- Remember a flashback can work very effectively
- Check your work carefully for errors in spelling, punctuation



St Benedict's Sixth Form

Glossary English Language Combined

Audience: the receivers or intended receivers of a text (written, spoken, multimodal). The concept of an ideal audience/reader is often found in critical discourse. Texts might also have multiple audiences.

Dialogue is typically a **conversation** between two or more people in a **narrative** work.

Discourses: used in many different (and sometime contradictory) ways in language study. Can be used to refer to a mode of language (e.g. spoken or written discourse), a register (e.g. medical or legal discourse), a way of thinking about and presenting something (e.g. representing language using a discourse of decay).

Figurative language: language used in a non-literal way in order to describe something in another's terms (e.g. simile or metaphor).

Foregrounding: the way in which texts emphasise key events or ideas through the use of attention-seeking devices (in terms of lexis, semantics, phonology or grammar) that either repeat content (parallelism) or break established patterns (deviation). Deviation may be: • external: breaking from the normal conventions of language use, for example in the use of nonsense words or ungrammatical constructions • internal: breaking from a pattern that has previously been set up in the text for a striking effect.

Genre: the way of categorising and classifying different types of texts according to their features or expected shared conventions. Genres come into being as the result of people agreeing about perceived similar characteristics in terms of content or style. Genres are fluid and dynamic and new genres continually evolve as a result of new technologies and cultural practices.

Imagery visually descriptive or figurative language

Lexical Field groups of words connected by a shared meaning

Metaphor: a comparison between two things that states one thing is another, in order help explain an idea or show hidden similarities. Unlike a simile that uses "like" or "as" (you shine like the sun!), a metaphor does not use these two words. For example, in a famous line from Romeo and Juliet Romeo proclaims, "Juliet is the sun."

Mode: the way in which language is communicated between text producer and text receiver and the physical channel through which this is carried out. At its simplest, this could be spoken or written (visual or auditory channel). Mode also encompasses ideas around planning and spontaneity, distance between text producer and receiver, how transitory or long-lasting a text is. Mode is more than a binary opposition, is sometimes visualised as a continuum and is constantly changing as new communication technologies blur the lines between older forms.

Motif a **motif** is a recurrent image, idea, or symbol that develops or explains a theme, for example the use of fire may represent danger or passion in a text

Narrative: a type of text or discourse that functions to tell a series of events. A narrative is the organisation of experience told by a narrator to any number of narratees. A narrative has two distinctive parts:

- the story: the events, places, characters and time of action that act as the building blocks of the narrative
- the narrative discourse: the particular shaping of those building blocks into something worth telling through specific choices in language and structure.

Narrative structures: how events, actions and processes are sequenced when recounting a story

Poetic Voice: the way in which a sense of identity is projected through language choices so as to give the impression of a distinct persona with a personal history and a set of beliefs and values.

Point of view: the way in which events and experiences are filtered through a particular perspective to provide a particular version of reality. Point of view may be:



St Benedict's Sixth Form

- related to how a narrative is presented in terms of space and time through the use of deixis, time frames, and flashbacks and flashforwards
- related to a particular ideological viewpoint, such as an individual's way of seeing the world or thinking about events (often in an extreme way). These might be shown through the use of modal verbs, adjectives and adverbs to stress belief or commitment and/or the use of idiosyncratic words and phrases
- related to distinguishing between who tells and who sees, as in the case of a narrative told in the third person but which seems to be filtered through a particular character's consciousness.

Positioning: how a text producer places or orientates him/herself to the subject being presented and towards the audience or reader being addressed.

Purpose: the intention or objective behind a text in terms of what it is designed to do and how it is used. Texts can have many different and overlapping purposes.

Register: a variety (or style) of language that is associated with a particular situation of use. Registers may be either written, spoken or multimodal.

Representation: how experiences, views and ideas are 're-presented' to readers, listeners and viewers through language and other meaning-making resources in order to influence their way of seeing the world.

Sentence function: the purpose a sentence fulfils in communication: as a statement, question, command or exclamation. These are also referred to in many grammar books as (respectively): declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives.

Simile: A **simile** is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a metaphor, a **simile** draws resemblance with the help of the words "like" or "as.", for example "I wandered lonely as a cloud"

Symbol: a **literary** device that contains several layers of **meaning**, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. **Symbol** is using an object or action that means something more than its literal **meaning**. For example, a raven could act as a symbol of loss.

Syntax The order in which words are put together in a sentence. Syntax also refers to the length and type of sentences put together in a text

Theme: a central idea or message in a text for example love or freedom.

Word class: the grammatical category into which words can be placed, including noun, adjective, verb, adverb, determiner, pronoun, preposition, conjunction.

Glossary Additions: Add any new words you come across in your transition study.