



Making the Leap!

moving from GCSE to
A Level Literature study



An English and Media Centre Student Resource

2. Explore *emagazine*

emagazine is a magazine and website for A Level students with articles written by academics, critics, writers, teachers and students on texts and topics set for A Level – and on literature and language more generally.

If your school has a subscription and you are able to get the logins from your teacher, log in and spend some time browsing the site, dipping into articles, then choose one that interests you. (It doesn't even have to be on a text you have read.)

For those of you who are not able to get hold of the logins or whose school doesn't have a subscription, we've collected together a small selection of articles for you to browse and choose from. A few are on authors or texts you may have come across at GCSE, a few are more general and a few explore books you may want to read just for pleasure. (See the '*emagazine* Resource Pack' accompanying this download.)

If you are able to use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share ideas, then the activity will be most interesting and productive. If you can't just do it on your own.

- Dip into the openings of several articles and choose the one that most immediately grabs your attention.
- Read the article and pick out three points to share. These could be ideas you find interesting, that you want to question (perhaps because you disagree, perhaps because you want to find out more), a point you don't understand.
- Take one of the points and add your own ideas to it or write a new point of your own.
- Use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share your ideas on what you noticed about the way the article is written – its organisation and development, the style, the voice and what difference that made both to your enjoyment and understanding.
- At some point before you begin your A Level course, why not have a go at writing an *emag*-style article yourself? You could join up with a friend and arrange to be editors for each other, adding the title, standfirst (the little overview that introduces the article) and sub-heads. You could write about one of your GCSE set texts – or you could choose something completely different: a novel you've enjoyed, one of the poems or short stories you've come across in this pack, a broader literary topic.

1. Adapting Literature for Film
2. Crossover Fiction
3. Openings in Contemporary Fiction – Questions, Challenges and Surprises
4. Dickens and Realism
5. Comedy in Shakespeare's Tragedies
6. William Blake: The Tyger
7. William Wordsworth: A Poet of the Ordinary
8. Michael Rosen: Defining Poetry
9. Bloodlust, Savagery, Obsession and Excess – Gothic *Macbeth*
10. Navigating Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde's London
11. Structures of Innocence – Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*
12. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* – A Question of Trust (don't read this article until you have read the novel – it's a quick and enjoyable read, so if you haven't, give it a go).

8. Dip a Toe into Books about Books

As well as critical books about specific writers, there are also a wide range of books available about literature more generally. Some of these are written for people studying literature at university, others are written for a more general audience.

The opening pages of all the books listed below are available online via Amazon's 'Look Inside' feature.

- Read the opening pages of two or three (or more) of these books. Which would you most like to go on to read? Why?
- Select tiny quotations which interest or please you. Use these to create a poster, an Instagram post, or a Twitter thread.
- If you can, talk to a classmate about your choice, or share your selected quotations via the platform recommended and validated by your school. If you can't do this, explore your ideas in a written or voice message to yourself.

On novels:

John Mullan: *How Novels Work* (<https://tinyurl.com/hownovels>)

David Lodge: *The Art of Fiction* (<https://tinyurl.com/lodgefiction>)

Francine Prose: *Reading Like a Writer* (<https://tinyurl.com/prosereadwrite>)

On poetry

James Fenton: *An Introduction to English Poetry* (<https://tinyurl.com/fentonpoetry>)

Ruth Padel: *The Poem and the Journey* (<https://tinyurl.com/padelpoetry>)

Mark Yakich: *Poetry – A Survivor's Guide* (<https://tinyurl.com/yackichpoetry>)

On Shakespeare

Bill Bryson: *Shakespeare – The World as a Stage* (<https://tinyurl.com/brysonshakes>)

Emma Smith: *This is Shakespeare* (<https://tinyurl.com/smithshakes>)

On Drama

David Edgar: *How Plays Work* (<https://tinyurl.com/playswork>)

Richard Eyre: *Interviews with Theatre People* (<https://tinyurl.com/talktheatre>)

Steve Waters: *The Secret Life of Plays* (<https://tinyurl.com/lifeplays>)

On English in general

Robert Eaglestone: *Doing English* (<https://tinyurl.com/doingenglish>)

17. Create a 'Five Books' List

Every few weeks the website [Five Books](https://fivebooks.com/) (<https://fivebooks.com/>) asks a writer to recommend five books on their area of particular expertise or interest. Sometimes these are new books, sometimes they are classics, sometimes they include books that were important to them in their childhood. But they are all linked to a topic in some way. The writer explains why these books are important to them – or should be read by everyone.

It's a great way of finding something brilliant to read. Here are some examples of their young adult lists.

[The Best Young Adult Science Fiction Books recommended by Estelle Francis](https://fivebooks.com/best-books/the-best-young-adult-science-fiction-books/)

<https://fivebooks.com/best-books/the-best-young-adult-science-fiction-books/>

[The Best Coming-of-Age Novels About Sisters recommended by Laura Wood](https://fivebooks.com/best-books/coming-of-age-novels-sisters-laura-wood/)

<https://fivebooks.com/best-books/coming-of-age-novels-sisters-laura-wood/>

[The best books on Political Engagement For Teens, recommended by Adrienne Kisner](https://fivebooks.com/category/best-kids-books/young-adult/)

<https://fivebooks.com/category/best-kids-books/young-adult/>

- What about creating your own list of Five Books on a topic or genre you have read a lot about?
- For each book include the title and author, a cover if you can and why you have chosen it.
- Start your list with a general introduction to you and your list.
- Share your list with other people in your school – or publish it on the [Five Books website as one of the Reader Lists.](https://fivebooks.com/create-new-list/) (<https://fivebooks.com/create-new-list/>)

19. Put Together a Short Anthology of 6-10 Poems

- Begin by spending some time browsing online poetry libraries (see the links below), to get a sense of what you like and what you are not so keen on. As you read, make a note of any poems that appeal to you and why.
- Decide what the main idea behind your anthology will be, for example:
 - A theme e.g. love poems across time or cultures
 - A type of poem e.g. sonnets, lyrics
 - Humorous poems
 - Poems for reading aloud
 - Poems which do something interesting with form and layout
 - Poems which ‘speak to each other’ – for example, a poem from the 19th century which pairs well with a more recent one
 - Your own favourites.
- Now write a short introduction, to give readers a sense of what the collection offers, picking out something special about each of your chosen poems.
- Use the learning platform recommended and validated by your school to swap anthologies. If you can, take it in turns to interview the ‘editor’ of the anthology (either in written form or online, if your school platform allows that).

Online poetry libraries

Poetry Foundation

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

The Saturday Poem

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

National Poetry Library

<https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/online-poetry/poems>

Poem Hunter

<https://www.poemhunter.com/>

Poetry by Heart anthology

<https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/anthology/>

Scottish Poetry Library

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/>

Library of Congress Archive

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/archive-of-recorded-poetry-and-literature/about-this-collection/>

<https://poets.org/>

<https://poets.org/>

23. The Art of the Review

- Read three or four online reviews for a novel you enjoyed.

Places to find reviews

- By writers, critics etc: *Guardian*, *Independent*, *New York Times*, *Slate*
- By readers: Amazon, GoodReads, LibraryThing, Book Riot.
- Begin by thinking about your personal response to these – is there one you feel more in sympathy with, that captures what you thought and felt? Do you like the style/approach of one more than another?
- Then take a step back and look at each a bit more clinically. What do each of the reviewers focus on (the story, the characters, underlying themes, their personal response)? What approach do they take to writing the review?
- Drawing on what you have learned about the art of the review and the novel itself, either write your own or write a response to one of them. If you have time, you might like to read this article on [writing a great book review](https://www.stylist.co.uk/life/the-art-of-the-book-review/46762). (<https://www.stylist.co.uk/life/the-art-of-the-book-review/46762>)
- Send to your teacher to create a review database on the platform recommended and validated by your school.