



# ISAAC NEWTON ACADEMY

## ENGLISH LITERATURE Summer Learning

### SET TEXTS FOR AUTUMN TERM

These are the books you need to buy and read before the course begins. Check the ISBN number carefully before you order so that you get the right edition!

Remember: **these are the two most important books on this summer reading list.** So not only will you need to make sure that you have actually read them, you will also need to make sure that you have read them *well*.

According to David Lodge, 'narrative, whatever its medium – words, film, strip cartoon – holds the interest of an audience by raising questions in their minds, and delaying the answers.'

You need to be very alert to this on your first reading, as you can never have that first reading again. On any subsequent reading, you will already have a knowledge of the story as a whole, which will inform your reading of any of the parts.

So, **whenever you close the books below, stop and actually think about what you've read, and what questions it raises** – whether that's about what's going on, who that character that's just been introduced is, what they're referring to, or what you think it might mean for us and how we live our lives today. There is no question too big or too small.

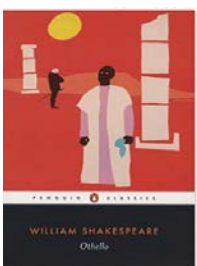
**Record these questions as they occur to you, in a reading journal, and bring this with you on the first day of term.**

#### ***The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (2017 edition, Vintage, ISBN: 978-1784873189)**



There's a reason this is now a 'smash hit TV series'; in fact, there are several. Written in 1985, this dystopian novel depicts a world that is scarily familiar in our 'post-truth', 'fake-news' filled world that is awash with 'alternative facts'. Set in a not-too-distant future, Offred, the book's protagonist, has only one function: to breed. If she deviates, she will, like dissenters, be hanged at the wall or sent out to die slowly of radiation sickness. But even a repressive state cannot obliterate desire – neither Offred's nor that of the two men on which her future hangs.

#### ***Othello* by William Shakespeare (2015 edition, Penguin, ISBN: 978-0141396514)**



Othello remains the world's greatest investigation into the age-old theme of jealousy: the 'green-eyed monster' that spurs a popular soldier and newly-married man to murder. But Othello touches on other subjects, too, as relevant today as they were in Elizabethan England. The lionisation of military strength. The cruelty of love. Ugly misogyny in what remains a man's world. Racism. In this powerful tragedy, innocence is corrupted and trust is eroded as every relationship is drawn into a tangled web of jealousies, insecurities, and desires.



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### RECOMMENDED READING

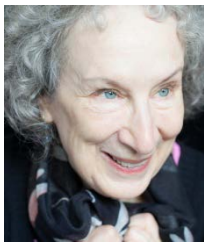
Hopefully you'll come away from your two set texts with a whole host of questions and a desire to know more. Reading more widely will help you.

**We recommend that you pick at least two of the recommended reads below to read over the summer, but if you want to read more, well, that is great!**

We will be reflecting on what we chose and why on our return, so, again, you should make notes in your reading journal of what you thought when you finish each one – even if its nonplussed!

### IF YOU LIKED *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*:

***The Edible Woman, The Year of the Flood, or Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood**

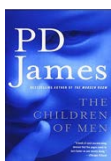


Her first book, her last book, and one of her most famous and most popular novels respectively, these will give you an insight into Atwood as a writer: the themes she's interested in, and the way that she tells stories. We heartily recommend *Oryx and Crake* if you want all-out weird with mutated pigs and a man who lives in a tree and goes by the name of Snowman; while the feminists amongst you might want to try either of her other two.



#### ***The Power* by Naomi Alderton**

Alderton was actually mentored by Atwood in this novel, which won her the 2017 Bailey's Prize for Women's Fiction. It's set in a world in which women can inflict terrible pain - even death – on men with just a flick of their fingers...



#### ***The Children of Men* by P.D. James**

The year is 2021. No child has been born for twenty-five years. The human race faces extinction. So begins *The Children of Men*, P.D. James's dystopian novel of mass infertility and chilling mystery...



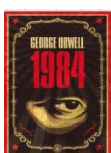
#### ***The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

This might be the bleakest book you'll ever read. If you had a pound for every time he uses the word 'grey' you'd probably give up on your A-Levels and buy a big house in the sun. Ms Hostick loves it; Ms Atkinson hates it. You decide...



#### ***A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess**

Notorious for its nightmare vision of a not-too-distant future in which fifteen-year-old Alex and his three friends rob, rape, torture and murder - for fun - this novel is one of *the* most controversial novels ever written, which was initially banned on its release...



#### ***1984* by George Orwell**

Sales of *1984* soared the night that Trump got in, placing the book top of the best-seller's lists for months. It tells the story of Winston Smith, who diligently re-writes history for the Ministry of Truth, whilst inwardly rebelling, all under Big Brother's watchful eye...

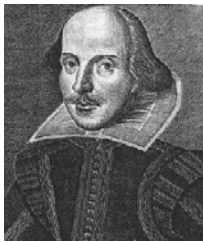


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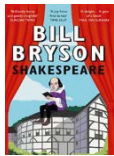
## ENGLISH LITERATURE Summer Learning

### IF YOU LIKED *OTHELLO* TRY:

***King Lear, Hamlet, or Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare**



Every teenager loves a tragedy, and these are full of it. In *Lear* we see more noble men made mad by the malign machinations of their greedy good-for-nothing kids. In *Hamlet* it's the teenager who's mad, hell-bent on avenging his father's death at any cost. But for those of you who want a blood-bath, it's *Titus* you should turn to, where not only do we see some heinous violence against women that made five people faint, we also see how Shakespeare dealt with race.



***Shakespeare: The World's A Stage* by Bill Bryson**

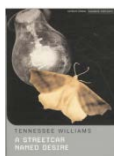
If you struggled to know what to write about Elizabethan England at GCSE, then you might find that Bill Bryson's biography can help you navigate the myths, half-truths and downright lies to make sense of the man behind the masterpieces...



***Shakespeare on Toast: Getting a Taste for the Bard* by Ben Crystal**

Actor and author Ben Crystal brings the bright words and colourful characters of the world's greatest hack-writer brilliantly to life, handing over the key to Shakespeare's plays and unlocking the so-called 'difficult bits' to shed light on his language, life, and times...

### IF YOU WANT A HEAD-START ON THE OTHER SET TEXTS:



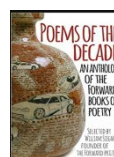
***A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams (ISBN: 978-1408106044)**

Written by a playwright that changed the direction of Ms Rudd's life forever, this play is a subtle, slow-burning tragedy that shows a turbulent confrontation between traditional values in the American South and the rough, aggressive materialism of the new world...



***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (ISBN: 978-0141198965)**

Frankenstein is the classic Gothic horror novel, which has thrilled and engrossed readers for two centuries. It is a superb blend of science fiction, mystery, and thriller, as scientist, Victor Frankenstein 'gives birth' to a creature that turns on its maker with tragic results...



***Poems of the Decade* edited by the Forward Arts Foundation (ISBN: 978-0571325405)**

This anthology is the perfect introduction to a wide range of contemporary poetry that speak of violence, danger, fear, and love in forms of language broken and reshaped by the need to communicate what it is to be alive now, here...



***English Romantic Verse* edited by David Wright (ISBN: 978-0140421026)**

The Romantic period is one entirely bound up with England's Industrial Revolution. With its focus on nature, the past, human psychology, and sensationalism, it marked one of the most radical shifts in poetry pre-WW1. Plus it has a horse on the front...



**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**Summer Learning**

**STUDY GUIDES FOR THE SUPER-KEEN:**

*The Handmaid's Tale: York Notes for A-Level* (2016 edition, ISBN: 978- 1292138183)

*Othello: York Notes for A-Level* (2015 edition, ISBN: 9 78-1447982258)

*A Streetcar Named Desire York Notes for A-Level*(2015 edition, ISBN: 978-1447982265)

*Frankenstein: York Notes for AS and A2* (2011 edition: ISBN: 978- 1447913214)

**PERFORMANCES, EXHIBITIONS, AND EVENTS:**

**EXHIB:** *Into the Unknown: A Journey Through Sci-Fi* at the Barbican (£10 tickets for 14-25s)

**TALK:** Penguin Classics Book Club at the Barbican: *Frankenstein* 13<sup>th</sup> July 7:30pm (Ticketed)

**TALK:** Penguin Classics Book Club at the Barbican: *1984* 20<sup>th</sup> July 7:30pm (Ticketed)

**FILM:** Sci-Fi Sundays at the Barbican: screened at 4:00 every Sun till 20<sup>th</sup> Aug (Ticketed)

**EXHIB:** *Desire, Love, Identity: Exploring LGBTQ Histories* at the British Museum (Free)

**EXHIB:** *Gay UK: Love, Law, and Liberty* at the British Library (Free)

**PERF:** National Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet* at the Southbank Centre 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Aug (Ticketed)

**PERF:** *King Lear* at Shakespeare's Globe from 10<sup>th</sup> August (£5 standing tickets)

**PERF:** Tennessee Williams' *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* at the Young Vic (Ticketed)

**EVENT:** *Poem-A-Thon* at the Poetry Cafe 22<sup>nd</sup> July from 12noon onwards (Free)