



Conyers Sixth Form Transition Work

English Literature

Congratulations on your enrolment to Conyers Sixth Form; please find below, tasks that will aid your transition from GCSE to Level 3 study. Your subject teacher will check completion of this work in September.

1. Read any book from the accompanying reading list. Find out a bit more about a few of the books on the list and create your own “to do” reading list for the coming months.
2. Research the life and works of the American writer F Scott Fitzgerald. Use at least 5 different sources from the internet or even books! Find out about where he was from, what his family life was like, what education he had, the works he wrote, his career ups and downs, his relationships, how his works were received and anything else you find interesting.
3. Answer the following question: What were the key influences on F Scott Fitzgerald’s writing?

Include as many elements of your research as you can in your answer. Try to relate the facts you have found to elements of his writing that you have read about.

Bonus challenge: read any work by F Scott Fitzgerald, other than *The Great Gatsby*, which is on the course.

What should I read?

- Jane Austen:

Read all her major novels. *Pride and Prejudice* is actually the best. But smart critics like to suggest that *Emma* or *Persuasion* are more sophisticated.

- Why read Austen?

She is funny, ironic, smart, emotional, clever, subtle, engaging, curious, involving. Everything in her writing is rich in intelligent and comical suggestion. Her plots are romantic and relatable, even though her world is one rather alien to our contemporary culture. She writes about manners, relationships, family and love in early nineteenth century England. Hers is a world of privilege and wealth, a patriarchal culture, in which the most interesting people are women.

- Muriel Spark

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

- Why should I read this?

It's a short, clever, funny, curious tale of a powerful teacher who has a strong influence on her young students. She calls her girls the "crème de la crème" and celebrates her own teaching, claiming that she is in her "prime" and they are lucky to be taught by her. The book is told from the perspective of the students, who can only guess at the complex web of rivalry and sexual intrigue that is at work amongst the school staff where Miss Brodie works. Ultimately, Miss Brodie is betrayed and forced to resign. But who was her betrayer?

- Charlotte Brontë

Jane Eyre

- Why should I read this?

It's an intense, powerful romance, which tells the story of orphan Jane and her tough upbringing. Eventually, she becomes a governess in the house of the dashing Mr Rochester. But who is the mysterious figure in the attic? A ghost? A madwoman? A figment of Jane's imagination?

- Jean Rhys

Wide Sargasso Sea

- Why should I read this?

This is twentieth century novel inspired by *Jane Eyre*. It tells the story of the mysterious figure in Mr Rochester's attic! It's an intense and fascinating account of life in the Caribbean in the early nineteenth century.

- Ali Smith

How to be Both

- Why should I read this?

Smith presents two stories. One is about a teenage girl trying to unravel a mystery. The other is set in Renaissance Italy and features an artist with a curious secret. The two stories intersect in strange ways. It's a lively, imaginative exploration of politics, personal relationships, art, gender identity, time and the supernatural.

- Toni Morrison

Beloved

- Why should I read this?

This is an extraordinary and powerful book about slavery and racial injustice in nineteenth century America. It's also a ghost story and a story about family, love and memory. It is written in an original and experimental way. An important book.

- Virginia Woolf

Mrs Dalloway

- Why should I read this?

This is a modernist classic. Woolf explores the perspectives of her characters, digging deep into the unique consciousness of the individuals she creates. It's a book about mental health, relationships, London, society, culture. Woolf's precision and fluency make it a pleasure to read.

- Nan Shepherd

The Living Mountain

- Why should I read this?

In this non-fiction book, Shepherd explores her own love of nature as she describes her encounters with the Scottish highland landscape. It's a beautifully written account of one woman's experiences in building a sustaining relationship with nature.

- Susanna Clarke

Piranesi

- Why should I read this?

This is a strange, involving book about a parallel universe and a curious conspiracy. A character is trapped in a collapsing mansion. Why is he there? Who is his mysterious captor? It will certainly intrigue and inspire you.

- Anne Carson

The Autobiography of Red

- Why should I read this?

This is a verse novel about a winged monster and his troubled love life. It's an exploration of identity, freedom, sexuality and desire. It's fascinating and strange. You might also want to read Caron's extended essay on sexuality in Greek literature: *Eros Bittersweet*.

- James Joyce

Dubliners

- Why should I read this?

This is an intricate, precise, emotional group of short stories that all intertwine in subtle and suggestive ways. The volume culminates with the story 'The Dead' which is a beautifully rendered story about heartbreak and self-awareness. Gabriel has his character scrutinised and found wanting in an apparently convivial evening, before having to confront the truth that he has never loved anyone the way his wife once loved another man. It is probably the finest short story ever written.

- E M Forster

Howards End

- Why should I read this?

This is a clever, interesting, emotionally involving story of class conflict, driven by an apparently light plot about romance and self-definition. It is comic and tragic by turns. It is written with a subtle precision that is engaging and challenging at the same time. Two young middle class women encounter a serious, intellectual, working class man at a concert. A tangle of misunderstandings and follies ensues.

- Katherine Mansfield

Collected Short Stories

- Why should I read this?

Mansfield's stories take apparently ordinary situations and reveal complex things about characters, relationships, culture, society, politics that are operating under the surface. They suggest things and leave the reader to make sense of what is being hinted at. They are precise, contained, carefully wrought to draw us into a life and a world by observing a snapshot of a situation.

- Mikhail Bulgakov

The Master and Margarita

- Why should I read this?

This is a bizarre, surreal story about the devil in Moscow, in the form of a cat. It's a political satire about the miseries of life in twentieth century, Soviet Russia. It's also a wild fantasy about magic and danger.

- Oscar Wilde

The Picture of Dorian Gray

- Why should I read this?

A strange, queer story about a young man who has a portrait in the attic which ages, whilst he stays looking young forever.

- Leo Tolstoy

Anna Karenina

- Why should I read this?

This is perhaps the greatest novel ever written. It's an emotional story about Anna's wild affair, her dreary husband and a range of related characters. Everything is here.

- Ivan Turgenev

The House of Gentlefolk

- Why should I read this?

A deceptively simple story about thwarted love. The concluding chapter is a work of stunning genius – showing the main character revisiting the places in the book years after the main action took place. The very end is devastatingly emotional.

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman

The Yellow Wallpaper

- Why should I read this?

It's a feminist classic, exploring the treatment of women in a patriarchal society. A woman is driven to madness by her confinement in an old-fashioned family.

- Anthony Burgess

A Clockwork Orange

- Why should I read this?

Set in a dystopian future, this book follows the misadventures of the violent young hooligan, Alex. It is written in future slang and was turned into a controversial film, which the director himself banned from being shown.

- Kurt Vonnegut

Slaughterhouse Five

- Why should I read this?

This is a surreal response to horror. Inspired by Vonnegut's own involvement in the horrific bombing of Dresden in the Second World War, the story spirals into science-fiction strangeness, perhaps as a way of evading guilt and trauma. It is punctuated by the defeated refrain: And so it goes.

- Carol Ann Duffy

The World's Wife

- Why should I read this?

Duffy imagines the lives of the wives of famous men throughout history. She writes in a witty, imaginative and inspiring way as she speaks up for the women whom history has erased.

- E E Cummings

Selected Poems

- Why should I read this?

A great entry level text for the would-be poetry reader. Cummings – get it right, cummings – writes delicate, clever little poems that play with form in unusual ways, challenging conventions of capitalisation and punctuation. His poems can be funny, satirical even, but they are mostly beautiful, spare and precise.

- Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart

- Why should I read this?

Nigerian author, Achebe charts the influence of invading colonisers on his country by focusing on one village and its struggles over power and freedom. The book smoulders with a rage that is never quite expressed until the final, devastating, conclusion.

- Mary Shelley

Frankenstein

- Why should I read this?

Yes, the story of a monster. Yes, Frankenstein is NOT the monster – he's the crazy scientist who made it. It's a story that has been retold many times. Shelley tells it as a philosophical investigation into science, ethics, knowledge, nature, identity, freedom.

- Herman Melville

Moby Dick

- Why should I read this?

This book contains everything. It's about a mad whaler who chases the white whale Moby Dick, obsessively. Along the way, we find out about a thousand ethical issues and meet an array of fascinating characters. Melville's language is rich, vivid, powerful. The book throbs with raw energy, even as it overwhelms the reader with facts about whales, whaling, the sea.

- Henrik Ibsen

A Doll's House

- Why should I read this?

This play caused scandal when it was first produced in the late 19th century. It tells the story of a dissatisfied wife and mother, who opts to leave her family in pursuit of self-fulfillment. It's a hammer blow to the complacently patriarchal society it describes.

- Kate Chopin

The Awakening

- Why should I read this?

Another early feminist text, this tells the story of a woman struggling against the confining expectations of her time.

- Iain Banks

The Wasp Factory

- Why should I read this?

A strange, eerie, troubling exploration of the mind of a very troubled teenager. It was labelled a “work of unparalleled depravity” when published in 1984.

- Herman Hesse

Glass Bead Game

- Why should I read this?

A curious, philosophical text, about a mysterious chess-like game and the organisation set up to defend its principles. It will change you. Also try *Steppenwolf* and *Narcissus and Goldmund* by Hesse.

- Thomas Mann

Death in Venice

- Why should I read this?

This is the story of a strange, troubling obsession. A composer visits Venice and becomes obsessed by a beautiful young man he sees there. It’s also an enquiry into the nature of art and creativity.

Jean-Paul Satre

Nausea

- Why should I read this?

Satre was an existentialist. He posits the idea that human beings can dictate their own personality and write their fate. This seems uncontroversial now, I suppose. In this book, we follow the thoughts of an isolated, alienated individual, who is increasingly sickened by the world around him.

- Irvine Welsh

Trainspotting

- Why should I read this?

This is a dark, disturbing exploration of the lives a group of heroin addicts in Edinburgh. It was made into a falsely cool film, but it is not cool; it is real and terrible.

- P G Wodehouse

The Inimitable Jeeves

- Why should I read this?

Jeeves and Wooster are a classic comic couple – the idiotic aristocrat and his brilliant, dry, observant servant. Wodehouse writes with such wit and lively invention that the stories are a pure joy to read.

- John Fowles

The French Lieutenant's Woman

- Why should I read this?

The book tells a story from the past about romance and the role of women in nineteenth century. He plays with time and perspective in interesting ways, ending the book in two different ways.

- Joseph Conrad

Heart of Darkness

- Why should I read this?

This is an extraordinary, if controversial book. Conrad takes the reader on a journey into the horrors of the colonial invasions of Africa in the nineteenth century. He writes with such energy and power.

Raymond Chandler

The Big Sleep

- Why should I read this?

Chandler wrote clever, complicated detective novels that are characterised by their witty, hard-boiled style. This is perhaps the most famous. Detective Philip Marlowe gets drawn into a web of deceit and murder as he tries to get to the heart of a curious mystery.

- William Gibson

Neuromancer

- Why should I read this?

This sci-fi classic invented the matrix and the idea of cyberspace. It follows the misadventures of cyber thief who connects his consciousness to a kind world wide web in order to enter bank accounts and empty them.

- Kazuo Ishiguro

The Remains of the Day

- Why should I read this?

A stately, quiet exploration of the hopeless life a servant in a big country house, who does his duty at his own expense and misses his one chance at romance because he cannot step outside of his role as loyal servant.

- Maggie O'Farrell

Hamnet

- Why should I read this?

This is a vivid exploration of the life and death of Shakespeare's son. It focuses especially on Shakespeare's wife and how she deals with her wayward husband and her needy family.

- Paulo Coelho

The Alchemist

- Why should I read this?

This is short, inspiring fable about the purpose of life. It follows the story of an Andalusian shepherd and his quest for treasure and meaning.

- Graham Greene

Brighton Rock

- Why should I read this?

A classic crime story about the terrible Pinkie and how he befriends an innocent woman because he suspects she is a witness to a murder that he is involved with.

- Arthur Miller

Death of a Salesman

- Why should I read this?

A twentieth century play about the destructive power of capitalism and how the American Dream is all washed up.

- Christopher Marlowe

Dr Faustus

- Why should I read this?

This is a classic 16th century play about a man who sells his soul to the devil.

Johannes V Jensen

The Fall of the King

- Why should I read this?

This is an extraordinarily powerful story of a medieval king and his overthrow.

Alisdair Gray

Lanark

- Why should I read this?

A surreal, varied, bleak book about life in Scotland and in a parallel universe.

Georges Perec

Life a Users Manual

- Why should I read this?

This is an extraordinary book. It tells the stories of all the people living in an apartment block in Paris, especially one man who has a hobby of travelling the world, painting harbour scenes and then making a jigsaw out of the painting. It refers to many other stories and works of literature and it follows knight's move logic in constructing its many plots.

Henry James

The Turn of the Screw

- Why should I read this?

This is a ghost story. Or is it? A governess gets a job looking after two strange children who seem to be haunted by their former governess and another sinister servant who died after befriendng the children. It is so full of mystery and strangeness.

Ursula le Guin

The Left Hand of Darkness

- Why should I read this?

This is a great sci-fi book full of interesting ideas. It famous for its depiction of the ambisexual Gethenians. Le Guin is a great sci-fi writer who always raises interesting moral, political and philosophical issues in her works.

Ismail Kadare

Three Elegies for Kosovo

- Why should I read this?

It's a powerful indictment of violence and national bigotry. It tells the story of an historic battle and its aftermath, then races forward to the violence of the twentieth century. A forceful attack upon militarism and prejudice.

Tarjei Vesaas

The Ice Palace

- Why should I read this?

It's a strange, disturbing examination of the psyche of a young girl. It is beautiful and terrible. The ice palace is a frozen waterfall that is magical and dangerous. We follow the story of an outsider who finally finds a way to make a friend before disappearing mysteriously. It will drive you on to reach its bleak conclusion.