

L4 Summer Holiday Reading

Next year's U4 will be working towards GCSEs in English Language and English Literature. Every set will study Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and an anthology of poetry. You will also study a modern novel or play and a work of nineteenth-century prose.

For the English Language GCSE, you will be tested on unseen extracts from fiction and non-fiction. The best way of preparing for this is to read widely – in almost any genre. A good place to start would be a collection of short stories, such as:

- [*The Glimpse of Truth*](#) ed. David Miller
- [*The Penguin Book of the Contemporary British Short Story*](#) ed. Philip Hensher
- [*The Penguin Book of the British Short Story*](#) ed. Philip Hensher (especially volume ii)
- [*The Granta Book of the American Short Story*](#) ed. Richard Ford

Some novels worth exploring – for their own sake mainly, but also as contexts for the set texts – are:

- Dystopian novels such as George Orwell's *1984*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, John Lanchester's *The Wall* and Dave Eggers' *The Circle*.
- A novel about 'coming of age' (or *Bildungsroman*) such as Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*, Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, David Mitchell's *Black Swan Green*, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Graham Swift's *Waterland*. Some classics related to these include Dickens's *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- Nineteenth-century gothic texts such as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* would also make good further reading. More recent writers inspired by the gothic include Michelle Paver (*Dark Matter*), Angela Carter (*The Bloody Chamber*) and Susan Hill (*The Woman in Black*).

And some good non-fiction to read would be:

- Sebastian Junger, *War* (about what it says, and grippingly written)
- Joe Simpson, *Touching the Void* (a classic account of a mountaineering trip gone wrong)
- William Dalrymple, *In Xanadu* (an exhilarating, thrilling account of a journey overland through Asia)
- Helen Macdonald, *H is for Hawk* (a much praised book about taming a hawk)
- George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1930s poverty made vivid)
- Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind* (a meditation on nature and man)
- Laurie Lee, *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (a young man walks through Spain)
- Eric Schlosser, *Command and Control* (a fascinating, frightening account of nuclear weapons)
- Sam Leith, *You talkin' to me?* (how to sound very clever indeed)
- Brian MacArthur (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Modern Speeches* (classics of C20 and C21 oratory)

Browse these and other books alongside them in a good bookshop or library, or investigate them online using the 'look inside' feature of online booksellers, before deciding which ones to read.