



ASHLYNS SCHOOL

Ashlyns School

The Challenge Curriculum

English



Reading task



Research task



Watching task



Student-led task



Listening task



Creative task



Writing task



Trip/visit task

English – Years 7, 8 and 9



Reading

Read a 19th Century text:

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens (1838)
Great Expectations by Charles Dickens (1861)
Moonfleet by J Meade Faulkner (1898)
The Sign of Four by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1890)
Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson (1883)
Black Beauty by Anna Sewell (1877)
Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe (1719)
Dracula by Bram Stoker (1897)
The Hound of the Baskervilles by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1902)

Read a book from a genre that you haven't read before:

Classic
Horror
Mystery
Fantasy
Sci Fi
Romance
Graphic Novel
Historical Fiction
Dystopian
Thriller etc

Look on the LRC app [LRC](#)

Explore fascinating, personal and vital stories from Shakespeare's Globe:

[Shakespeare's globe](#)

You could even challenge yourself to stand as a Groundling to watch a full performance.

Do you know your Hercules from your Perseus?

Explore them here:

[Who were the ancient Greek gods and heroes?](#)

Can you think of any links to modern stories that you have read?



Research

Find a current news story - local/national/international

Research the topic and see how different news sources report on the same event.

Based on your research, write your own article for a newspaper of the event.

Find an article in a magazine that you find interesting. Look up the name of the author and see whether they have written any other articles or works of non-fiction that you would like to read.

Why not challenge yourself to read an article from one of these magazines?

National Geographic

[Latest Stories](#)

New Scientist

[New Scientist | Science news and science articles from New Scientist](#)

Time

[TIME | Current & Breaking News | National & World Updates](#)

 Writing	<p>Think you know how to use your Punctuation correctly.</p> <p>Test yourself here Grammar Exercises</p>
 Visit	<p>Visit the Foundling Museum and explore our links. The Foundling Museum: Discover A Piece of London History</p> <p>Visit the Imperial War Museum to help strengthen your understanding of WWI to support your study of the novel Warhorse. First World War Stories</p> <p>Take a pad of paper and a pen to the free Tring Natural History Museum in Tring and explore the exhibitions.</p> <p>Find an animal in there that interests you and write a descriptive piece of writing using plenty of techniques.</p> <p>Can people guess which animal you've described from the piece of writing without naming it directly? Galleries</p> <p>Visit the Roald Dahl exhibit at the Roald Dahl museum in Great Missenden or Visit the exhibition at the Bucks County Museum in Aylesbury. Find out facts about his life and the characters he created. Roald Dahl Museum Bucks County Museum</p> <p>Visit the WW1 trenches on Berkhamsted Common and start an investigation into how poets have written about war and conflict throughout time. Berkhamsted WWI troop training trenches</p>
 Creative	<p>Create a quiz/game based on a book you have read in school. You could do an online quiz (using a platform like Kahoot) or you could create a board game with questions based on a character's journey.</p>
 Listening	<p>Listen to the 'Rebel Girls' stories podcast. Rebel Girls</p> <p>The bestselling book has stories about inspirational women throughout history and our modern world. The stories are read aloud and available to listen to for free.</p> <p>If you feel inspired by a particular woman, conduct some research and create an informative leaflet or poster about her.</p>
 Student-led	<p>Sports Journalism - Go and watch a local or National sporting event either live or on television. Record your thoughts on the match/game either in writing or via an audio device. You should think about your audience and the language you use in your reporting.</p> <p>For tips follow this link: Sports Journalism tips</p>

English – Years 10 and 11



Take a risk with your reading and read a novel outside your comfort zone and write or record a review

Read a non-fiction book about a current issue

eg No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference by Greta Thunberg

The ground-breaking speeches of Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist who has become the voice of a generation, including her historic address to the United Nations.

Read the first chapter here: [Greta Thunberg](#)

or

Women in Science by Rachel Ignotofsky, highlights the contributions of fifty notable women to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) from the ancient to the modern world.

Read another of William Golding's novels (if you have studied Lord of the Flies)

Try reading 'The Inheritors' which he considered his finest novel. Although the premises are completely different, can you think of any parallels in what Golding was trying to convey?

Read a weekend newspaper.

Try to find a report or article on each of these topics:

UK Politics
World Politics
Injustice
Science
Health or fitness
Film review

Make notes on how the language used changes depending on the subject matter.

Reading



Watch and review a Live production of 'Macbeth' performed at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre:

[Macbeth](#)

Some questions to get your review started:

1. Establish a context. What is the name of the show? Where is it on? Why is it happening?
2. Give us a sense of how the show works. What are the choices the director has made?
3. Give an evaluation. Look at intention and then look at realisation.
4. Make a verdict. Was it alright? Was it great? Would you recommend it to your friends?
5. Most importantly, above all else be honest and have fun!

Explore myths from around the world with this Ted-Ed playlist:

[The myth of cupid](#)

Many works of literature have been inspired by mythology so it may surprise you how familiar some of these stories are!

Watching

English – Years 12 and 13



Take a risk with your reading

How to find your new read:

Ask friends.

Follow writers, book clubs and book podcasts on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Read book reviews.

[The 100 best novels | Books](#)

[The 100 best books of the 21st century](#)

Write or record a review of your 'out of your comfort zone read'.

Read a book in translation

[Book of the day](#)

The Art of the Essay

A short form of literary composition based on a single subject matter, and often gives the personal opinion of the author.

A famous English essayist, Aldous Huxley defines essays as, "A literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything."

Dip your toe into the world of the essay by reading (bits of) some really brilliant examples of the form. Try to think about which ones you like, which ones you want to carry on reading, which ones help you discover something new or understand something better. How much is it to do with the subject matter? How much is it to do with the style and voice of the essay?

The ideas below are just suggestions to get you started. If while browsing these you spot another essay title that intrigues you, read it instead.

[Beware of feminism lite |](#)

[My Mother's Tongue](#)

[George Orwell: Politics and the English Language](#)

[Some Notes on Attunement](#)

It's now over to you to join the long tradition of essay writers. Choose a topic – it might be related to a book you've read, but it doesn't have to be. Think about what you liked in the essays you dipped into.

Put your essay away. In a few weeks either come back to this essay and redraft it, or choose another topic and have another stab at essay writing.

Read a Prize-winning Novel

Have a go at reading a prize-winning novel. You can find lists of novels which have won prizes by searching in Google or by using the links below.

[The Booker Prizes | The leading literary award](#)

[Carnegie](#)

[Wellcome - Costa Book Awards | Behind the beans](#)

[Women's Prize for Fiction Home - Women's Prize for Fiction](#)

[The Daggers](#)

[Wellcome Book Prize |](#)

[The James Tait Black Prize](#)

To help you make your choice use Amazon's 'Look Inside' to dip into some first pages. Search online for reviews. The Guardian, New York Times, Independent, [www.goodreads.com](#) are all good places to find interesting reviews – sometimes more than one for the same book.

Choose one to read. Visit your local library's website to find about borrowing digital downloads.

That's it. Just read and enjoy it. Go on to read another from the list or by the same author if you want to. Talk to someone about it if you want to. Write about it if you want to. But you don't have to. **You could just read it.**



Visit the Foundling Museum and explore our links

[The Foundling Museum: Discover A Piece of London History](#)



Let a poem brew

• Choose a poem. You could choose one from your exam anthology or browse the websites listed below.

[Poetry Foundation](#)

[The Saturday poem | Books](#)

[Poems](#)

[Scottish Poetry](#)

[Poets](#)

Set a timer for 10 seconds.

Do a 'snapshot' look at the poem for 10 seconds – don't try to read it and jot down anything you notice about it.

Do the same again but this time for 30 seconds.

Now put the poem to one side.

On three different days over the next week or so, spend about 10 minutes reading the poem and writing about it in any way you want. You might write about what you like or what you are puzzled by or you might just ask questions. It's up to you whether you read over what you wrote on the previous occasion – there are advantages to both ways. Over the course of the next few weeks you could try the activity both ways.

On the last day, read the poem again, read over all your writing, then make a few notes or record a voice message exploring how your response to the poem changed and developed.

Play with a Text

Playing and messing about with a text or transforming it in two or three different ways is a really effective and fun way to investigate and clarify for yourself what is distinctive about the original. It's something both creative writers and critics do.

Experiment with one or more of the activities suggested here:

1. Experimenting with the form and layout of a poem

Choose a poem you like. This could be one you have studied at school or one you find online. Copy and paste the poem into a Word document or type it up. Make a copy of it and arrange it so it looks like one continuous piece of prose.

Now experiment with different ways of making the lines break.

What different effects can you create? Try reading your different versions out loud. Do your line breaks make you read it differently?

If you enjoy doing this, you might be interested in reading this

[Learning the Poetic Line by Rebecca Hazelton](#)

2. A transformation from prose to drama

Take a short extract from a novel you know well (for example, A Christmas Carol, Lord of the Flies) and experiment turning it in a piece of drama.

What changes do you have to make? Is anything lost in the transformation? Is anything gained?

3. A visual experiment with fonts

In 2012 graphic artists were invited to play with the first page of Great Expectations using their choice of font and layout to reveal the meaning they see in the opening to the novel. Each designer was also asked to explain the thinking behind their transformation. Their designs were collected in the book Page One. [Graphic Design 1: Great Expectations](#)

Can you do the same for a text you know well?

Present the original and transformed text side by side, along with a short reflection on what you have discovered.

Creative



Experts in the Spotlight: [Making the leap](#)

On this link you will find short discussions on a wide range of literary texts and topics including: how to read 19th-century novels (and how to read poems), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, why George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* continues to be important, William Blake's poem 'London' (along with a reading of it), the difference between horror and terror, and dialogue in novels.

Over the next few days or weeks dip into these clips. You could make a note of new ideas you come across or share them with classmates or you could just let them brew in your head.

Books on TV

Watch (or think back to) a film or TV adaptation of a novel you know, eg *Northern Lights*, *Noughts and Crosses*, *Emma*, *David Copperfield*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Agatha Christie*.

(See BBC iPlayer for freely available dramas; Netflix and Amazon Prime have a wide selection if you have a subscription. Some complete dramas are also available on YouTube)

Write your own review of the adaptation you have watched.

Now write a pitch for a different novel you think would make a great film or film adaptation. Explain why and how you would approach it.

Watch an Online Play: *A Shakespeare play*

Choose a Shakespeare play you have never studied before. Watch the play online.

On a different day, watch the Shakespeare play you studied for GCSE. What difference does it make to the experience of watching it to have already studied it? What difference does watching it make to your understanding?

The LRC has plays you can borrow.

[Digital Theatre](#)

A play not Shakespeare! Enjoy watching the play.

Write the script for a podcast/online discussion between a critic and the director. (If you have been watching the same play as some of your classmates, hold an 'After Show' discussion. One of you could play the director, one a lead actor and one the interviewer/critic.)

The LRC has plays to borrow.

You can see examples of this sort of discussion on the following websites (all are freely accessible):

[NT Talks on Apple Podcasts](#)

[RSC Shakespeare Learning Zone](#)

[Digital Theatre](#)

Dip a Toe into Books about Books

There are a wide range of books available about general literature. Some of these are written for people studying literature at university, others for a more general audience.

The opening pages of the books 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 if you can't do this, explore your ideas in a written message to yourself.

[How Novels Work - John Mullan](#)

[The Art of Fiction](#)

[Reading Like a Writer Guide](#)

[Shakespeare World Stage](#)

[Secret Life of Plays](#)

[Poetry Survivors Guide](#)

[Plays Work](#)



Writing

Think you know how to use your Punctuation correctly - test yourself here
[Grammar Exercises](#)

Try Exploratory Writing

Choose a short text you have not studied before. This could be the opening of a novel, a poem, a scene from a play – it doesn't matter what.

Some suggestions for where you can find extracts from different types of texts are suggested below.

Read the text, without making notes.

Now write about it. Just write, in any way you want, almost as though you are having a conversation with yourself. Let your ideas develop and change, contradict yourself, ask questions – it's up to you. The only rule is that you should write in full sentences, not notes or bullet points.

[First Chapters: Fiction Index](#)
[Competition Anthology](#)

Write a poem in response to a poem

Begin by choosing the poem you'd like to respond to. It might be a poem you know well, a poem you like but feel you've never really got to grips with, a poem on a subject you are interested in, a poem with a form that intrigues you. The choice is really up to you and you can always have a go at a different approach on another day. (To find your poem you browse the websites listed above)

Read the poem several times – including out loud. Leave it to one side, let it live in your head, come back and read it again after you've mulled it over a bit.

Write your poem in response. If you need to try several different ways of writing it. Experiment with it, changing the line breaks, or the images. Read it out loud. Record it and listen back to it – what do you notice when you hear rather than see it.

When you are satisfied with your poetic response, read both poems.
Write a short critical commentary on the two poems