

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## English Literature Bridging Activity Booklet



**St John  
Bosco  
College**

**6th Form**

### **Contents:**

- I. Session 1- Note Taking
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## **Activity 1 – Note-taking**

### **Maude Clare**

Out of the church she followed them  
With a lofty step and mien:  
His bride was like a village maid,  
Maude Clare was like a queen.

‘Son Thomas,’ his lady mother said,  
With smiles, almost with tears:  
‘May Nell and you but live as true  
As we have done for years;

‘Your father thirty years ago  
Had just your tale to tell;  
But he was not so pale as you,  
Nor I so pale as Nell.’

My lord was pale with inward strife,  
And Nell was pale with pride;  
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare  
Or ever he kissed the bride.

‘Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,  
Have brought my gift,’ she said:  
To bless the hearth, to bless the board,  
To bless the marriage-bed.

‘Here’s my half of the golden chain  
You wore about your neck,  
That day we waded ankle-deep  
For lilies in the beck:

‘Here’s my half of the faded leaves  
We plucked from the budding bough,  
With feet amongst the lily leaves, -  
The lilies are budding now.’

He strove to match her scorn with scorn,  
He faltered in his place:  
‘Lady,’ he said, - ‘Maude Clare,’ he said, -  
‘Maude Clare,’ – and hid his face.

She turn’d to Nell: ‘My Lady Nell,  
I have a gift for you;

Though, were it fruit, the blooms were gone,  
Or, were it flowers, the dew.

'Take my share of a fickle heart,  
Mine of a paltry love:  
Take it or leave it as you will,  
I wash my hands thereof.'

'And what you leave,' said Nell, 'I'll take,  
And what you spurn, I'll wear;  
For he's my lord for better and worse,  
And him I love Maude Clare.

'Yea, though you're taller by the head,  
More wise and much more fair:  
I'll love him till he loves me best,  
Me best of all Maude Clare.'

**Christina Rossetti**

### Activity

1. Why do you think that Rossetti uses pronouns first before introducing names?
2. Why is the speaker anonymous?
3. Why has Rossetti used a third person narrative?
4. Why are the main characters described as 'pale'?
5. What do you think Thomas' 'inward strife' might be?
6. What do you think of Nell's response to Maude Clare in the final stanza? Consider why she begins with 'And'.
7. Why does Nell choose to compliment Maude Clare?
8. Why do you think the narrator remains anonymous?
9. What is the purpose of comparing Thomas with his parents? What do you think that Rossetti was trying to achieve here?
10. What effect does the alternating rhyme scheme have?

### The Explosion

On the day of the explosion  
Shadows pointed towards the pithead:  
In the sun the slagheap slept.

Down the lane came men in pitboots  
Coughing oath-edged talk and pipe-smoke,  
Shouldering off the freshened silence.

One chased after rabbits; lost them;

Came back with a nest of lark's eggs;  
Showed them; lodged them in the grasses.

So they passed in beards and moleskins,  
Fathers, brothers, nicknames, laughter,  
Through the tall gates standing open.

At noon, there came a tremor; cows  
Stopped chewing for a second; sun,  
Scarfed as in a heat-haze, dimmed.

The dead go on before us, they  
Are sitting in God's house in comfort,  
We shall see them face to face –

Plain as lettering in the chapels  
It was said, and for a second  
Wives saw men of the explosion

Larger than in life they managed –  
Gold as on a coin, or walking  
Somehow from the sun towards them,

One showing the eggs unbroken.

**Philip Larkin**

### **Activity 2 – Further Readings of Maude Clare**

<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/crossetti/harrison2/1.html>

<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/christina-rossetti-gender-and-power>

<https://poemanalysis.com/maude-clare-by-christina-rossetti-poem-analysis/>

Remember the importance of 'reading around' the text or task you have been given. It is important to remember though when you are doing this that you are reading another person's opinion, and at A level we are interested in **your opinion**. Therefore, read as widely as you can, and refer to critical works in your response. Fundamentally though, you must make up your own mind about it all and express this coherently – A level English literature rewards **independent thought**.

## **Session 3 – Structure of a Text**

### **Drama Texts**

Primarily you must respond to the text as a piece of drama which is part of a story that is written to be performed on stage. Consider how the part of the text that you are studying begins and ends in terms of its dramatic action, whether it contains a crisis or critical moment and how this contributes to the overall dramatic process.

One useful way to do this is to imagine the scene on stage when you are constructing your response and consider the points below. When playwrights are writing plays they are engaging with dramatic structures, exits and entrances, the dialogue used, dramatic action, those who speak and those who are silent, soliloquies and asides, narrative time etc., so these are all invaluable starting points:

- Who is on stage?
- What is going on in the space?
- Which characters can hear what is being said?
- Does any character enter or exit? For what reason is this?
- Who speaks?
- What kind of speech is it – informal, formal, scheming, friendly, insincere?
- Who is dominating the scene? Who speaks the most? Is it related to their status?
- Is there anyone who is silent? Is this of any relevance?
- Are there any indications from the dialogue about stage directions, props or tone of voice?
- Is the setting important? Is it known?
- Where is it set – location (country, city, house, room), time of day (how much light)?
- What type of action is taking place?

Don't forget too that plays are written to be performed, so go and see them for yourselves. You can visit the theatre, or view a filmed version of the play (which is readily available online or sometimes even at the cinema). It is essential to remember, though, when you view these, that they are the interpretation of that particular director – there is no 'correct' way of performing these plays. Sometimes it is useful to view several versions of the same play for precisely that reason. Consider why the director has chosen to place emphasis on a specific action, word or movement, for example.

Have a look at the RSC's website which offers a wealth of valuable resources including filmed clips of some of the key scenes of their plays.

[www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk)

## Poetry

Consider what it is that makes poetry different to prose. Coleridge's comments that prose is "words in the best order" and poetry "the best words in the best order" is a lovely way of expressing it.

Consider the points below in relation to 'Maude Clare' (a copy of the poem can be found earlier on in this booklet):

- What attitudes to love are conveyed? How are they achieved?
- How typical of love poetry are these methods?
- Does the poet create any aural effects such as consonance, assonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia etc? What do these add to the poem?
- Is there anything about the order of the words that is significant?
- Has the poet used any figurative means of expression? For example, simile, metaphor, symbol etc. How do they add to the poem?
- How does the poet use stanza form such as line length, metre and rhyme effects? Don't forget to interpret this for yourself.
- Why has the poet chosen the specific beginning and ending? Are there other structural methods used? What effect does this have on the reader?

## Activity

Below are the first three stanzas of 'Maude Clare'. Track on each stanza what we learn about each character, the story and who speaks the most. The first three stanzas have been partially annotated for you:

### 'Maude Clare'

Out of the church she followed them – **who is she?**

With a lofty step and mien:

His bride was like a village maid,

Maude Clare was like a queen. – **comparison between Maude Clare and 'his bride'**

'Son Thomas, 'his lady mother said,

With smiles, almost with tears: – **why tears?**

'May Nell and you but live as true

As we have done for years;

'Your father thirty years ago

Had just your tale to tell; – **hinting that Thomas' father was the same**

But he was not so pale as you,

Nor I so pale as Nell.' – **why are they pale?**

Annotate the remainder of the poem and then write a response to the structure of the poem.

### Consider:

- Who has the most lines?
- Who closes off the poem?
- What exactly do we discover about the characters in each stanza?
- How much of the story is revealed in each stanza?

### Prose

#### Questions to consider with prose texts

- What is the significance of the title?
- What is the significance of the register/s used?
- What kind of novel/non-fiction is it? (Is there a relevant sub-genre term – e.g. bildungsroman, dystopian fiction, travel memoir etc?)
- What is the significance of the structure of the novel? (Is there anything distinctive about the use of parts, chapters etc?)
- What can be said about the nature of the narrative? (linear, non-linear, chronological? What point of view is adopted?)
- How is the reader given access to the thoughts and feelings of characters? (direct speech, reported speech, first person narrative, devices such as letters and journals etc?)
- If the third person is used, does the writer use free indirect discourse to give the reader glimpses of the thoughts and feelings of characters?
- How aware is the reader of the writer's thoughts and feelings?

### 'Othello'

#### **Act 5 Scene 2 – An Overview**

The play has been building to this tragic moment and before the curtain falls, both Desdemona and Othello die and the truth about Iago emerges.

- Desdemona is sleeping in bed when Othello enters. He reflects on what he is about to do and kisses her. She wakes and during the course of the dialogue, realises that he's going to kill her.
- Othello smothers Desdemona. Emilia enters, revealing that Cassio is alive. Desdemona briefly recovers and Emilia discovers what Othello has done. Desdemona dies. Emilia confronts Othello and declares her husband Iago a liar.
- Emilia's cries bring Montano, Gratiano and Iago on stage. Emilia confronts her husband who admits his actions. Othello, realising his error, falls on the bed.
- Emilia defends Desdemona's honour and refuses to be silent. Iago stabs her and she dies. Iago is restrained. Othello wounds Iago.
- Letters found in Roderigo's pocket confirm the truth of the situation. Othello stabs himself, dying on the bed. Iago remains silent. He is then taken away, and Lodovico promises to report these events.

### **Act 3 Scene 3 –An Overview**

This scene is central in the sense that it occurs at the heart of the play, but is also the point where Iago's scheming comes together.

- Desdemona and Emilia reassure Cassio that Othello will soon reinstate him
- Othello and Iago enter, at which point Cassio leaves. Iago later exploits this hasty departure, insinuating that Cassio has been playing false with Desdemona
- Desdemona enters and urges her husband to look favourably on Cassio. He wants to discuss it later. Desdemona exits
- Iago now exploits Othello, but pretends to be supportive. Iago's manoeuvrings result in Othello being plagued with doubts about his wife's fidelity.

### **Session 4 – Context**

#### **Example 1**

In the poem 'Maude Clare', Maude Clare comes across as quite a strong character as she has waited to take revenge on Thomas until his wedding day when he's marrying another, less pretty girl called Nell. She gets her revenge by returning the items they shared during their relationship. Maude Clare presents Nell with dead flowers 'were it fruit, the bloom were gone' or 'were it flowers, the dew'. This is a symbolic gesture of the love that Maude Clare and Thomas shared and implies intimacy suggesting that Maude is no longer virtuous.

Victorian society would have really looked down on Maude Clare for having been intimate with Thomas. However Thomas wouldn't have been judged harshly at all – society at the time was very hypocritical. The poem is saying that it was permissible for men to have been intimate before marriage but it wasn't the same for women. The Victorians therefore divided women into two categories, those who married and were deemed respectable and those who weren't and were viewed as a threat to society, and Maude Clare demonstrates this perfectly.

#### **Example 2**

Maude Clare is portrayed as a bitter and vindictive woman and it is evident in the poem that her 'lord' still holds feelings for her even though he is marrying the innocent and virtuous Nell. Rossetti draws on three differing female perspectives which vary in prominence and in doing this recreates a valuable insight into Victorian conventions. The ambiguity in the identification of the narrator affords the reader the opportunity to draw their own conclusions.

Typically, Victorian women were expected to serve their husbands. The poem 'Maude Clare' overturns this expectation and instead uses the character of Maude Clare as a stereotype that bucks this expectation. She is the most prominent female character, and a strong one at that, who instead of being submissive to her 'lord' puts him in his place and embarrasses him.

### **Some general advice:**

- Be careful not to deal with context in a generalised way. Although it's possible to talk about the general beliefs held by Elizabethans for example, you should avoid making sweeping statements which assume that all Elizabethans were racist or misogynist. As a comparison, you might think about all the people you know and consider whether their views can be lumped together as 'what 21<sup>st</sup> century people think'. Instead, remember that people have a variety of viewpoints, regardless of the times in which they lived.
- It's always far more beneficial to couch any points that you make about context in tentative terms and let the contextual material arise naturally from the play, rather than 'force' contexts into the text. Writing some facts about contexts that you've memorised won't ever be helpful – it always needs to be closely applied to the question and the text you are writing about. As ever, answering the question succinctly will always be the most useful thing you can do.

### **Additional Information – Myth busting for the A level exams and NEA**

#### **1. You will have to guess what the hidden requirements are for each question.**

There will be no hidden requirements that you will have to try to guess on **any** specification. What you need to do in order to succeed is to focus sharply, keep to the task and construct a relevant argument. You will be less successful if you try to shoehorn in extraneous material, include unrelated context and unrelated comments that are not required by the question.

#### **2. Analysing single words in any extract is a really good approach and is what you should be encouraged to do.**

You need to think about the interplay between the actions that are taking place as you read and the speech that is being heard. Consider the dialogue, the asides and soliloquies, the kinds of exchanges between characters. This will never mean a discussion of single words which is rarely productive and nearly always takes you away from the drama and thus the focus of the question.

**3. You should not write general introductions where you state your intentions, or conclusions where your key points are repeated.**

You should always focus on the task from the start, making a focused, concise comment in the first sentence. Don't waste precious time and words! Far too many students write introductions and conclusions which are vague, generalised and broad which do not gain them marks. See the guide below for further advice.

**4. If you don't know the quotation you need, then make it up!**

Inaccurate and made up quotations and textual details are often so glaring that they detract from your arguments. If you don't know quotations you are much better off simply explaining your ideas, using your own words. As long as your explanation and discussion is relevant to the question, you will be credited. Don't forget, your teachers and the examiners know these texts very well!

**5. Only write about techniques such as iambic pentameter or blank verse if you have something very specific to write about.**

Some students make the mistake of writing about features that they do not fully understand. Only write about these things if you know what they mean and it is fully relevant to the question.

**How to answer a question – some suggestions**

There are three key things that you should include in every paragraph of your response:

1. Refer to the question
2. Make a point
3. Refer to the author by name

**Activity:**

How does the response below include the three key points? See if you can identify them.

**Explore how Larkin presents ideas about life and death in 'The Explosion'.**

The poem, 'The Explosion', is split into three sections. In the first four stanzas, Larkin talks about how **everything seemed to be normal within the group of workers**. Stanza five explains briefly the event in a detached emotionless way, and the remaining four stanzas deal with ensuing events post-explosion. This structuring presents ideas about the transition from **life to death** and the people it affects very clearly. The idea of death is also presented using a semantic field of dark words such as "*chased*", "*tremor*", "*dimmed*" and "*dead*". There is also a very important link within the poem: when Larkin writes about the lark's eggs being lodged in the grass and then on the very last line referring to them again. By stating that the lark's egg remained unbroken, Larkin may be trying to portray to the reader the implication that the connection between the workers and their wives remains unbroken

(the connection between life and death) although the workers were killed, and perhaps he is attempting to provide comfort in the message that death is not the end.

Although the majority of the first section of the poem appears to be explaining to the reader that everything was normal on that morning, one line at the beginning ("*shadows painted towards the pithead*") suggests the opposite. 'Shadow' could be considered as another dark word used as part of the semantic field in the poem; and because it is used after the line "*on the day of the explosion*", I believe that Larkin was trying to imply that this day was destined to go wrong and as the shadows were pointed towards the pithead, maybe the line implies something that really bad was going to happen at the pit; almost like a story beginning, that we all know the ending of. However, in the line following this one ("*In the sun the slagheap slept*") the calm voice begins, and for the next few stanzas everyone and everything appears to be peaceful and ordinary – "*Fathers, brothers, nicknames laughter, Through the tall gates standing open*".

The middle section, the fifth stanza of the poem, is where the whole demeanour and mood is changed: "*tremor; cows stopped chewing for a second....neat gaze, dimmed*". Here, the explosion referred to in the poem's title evidently takes place and I believe that is where the ideas about life and death are shown most strongly. Larkin seems to be trying make us understand that in a split second one tiny little thing can change life into death ("*cows stopped chewing for a second*"). The message of the poem is that one minute everything may be calm and normal but no one knows what is about to happen – Larkin is referring to the unpredictability and uncertainty of life.

In the final section, Larkin states that the dead are "*sitting in God's house in comfort*". This suggests that the men who died are now peaceful again and happy. Larkin also states that "*for a second wives saw men of the explosion... gold as on a coin, or walking somehow from the sun*". The mood changes again, and Larkin implies that although the people still living are sad, the workers are as happy as they've ever been. This presents us with idea that death is peaceful and isn't as terrible as you would envisage it to be. I believe that Larkin is trying to convey many messages to the reader; one of which is you have to enjoy life because in a second it could be gone. Larkin is also stating that whether you are alive or dead you can find peace and that death shouldn't be looked upon as a terrible circumstance and life should be celebrated. This is why, I believe, the poem was written for a memorial; not to make people sad, but to assure people that the workers are happy together.

### **Some final advice on what to consider during your course:**

- Be prepared to take ownership of your work. This means reading your texts well in advance and several times
- Read around your subject using critical works
- Remember though to always give YOUR OPINION – have a clear, personal voice

- Always answer the question – the AOs will take care of themselves if you answer what is in front of you
- Don't subvert the question to what you'd like it to be
- You can pursue a single line of argument or you can consider differing viewpoints – both are equally valid
- PLAN – consider the argument before you begin writing it

Good luck and enjoy the course!

## Recommended Reading

Ian McEwan, *The Innocent, Saturday, Amsterdam, Atonement*\*

Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*

Peter Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor*

Paul Auster, *City of Glass, Ghosts, The Locked Room*

Brian Moore, *Lies of Silence*

Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*

Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock*\* (*September*)

Kate Atkinson, *When Will There Be Good News?*

\* set text for 2021 examination

## Are you planning on doing A-Level English Literature next year?

## Would you like to do some reading/listening/watching in preparation for starting the course now that your GCSE study is over?

If the answer to the above is yes, then please find an extended reading and watching list to take account for this period of time when we are all staying home. These books are not the texts that you are going to study - they are books that will help you to have a wider understanding of the genre that you will be working through. The texts you will be studying are at the bottom but you will read these in class next year, so it would be good to use this time to read more widely. You will study two genres: Tragedy and Crime Writing. For each genre I've suggested 3 books, 3 films/plays and 3 podcasts. This sheet is for tragedy. If you want more, please email me at \*\*\*\*\* and I'll provide further suggestions.

### Tragedy: Books

#### **Gimson's Kings and Queens: Brief Lives of the Forty Monarchs since 1066 by Andrew Gimson**

Gimson's Kings and Queens is the most entertaining and instructive book on the English monarchy you will ever read. For lovers of history, the experienced and the novice, the serious and the silly.



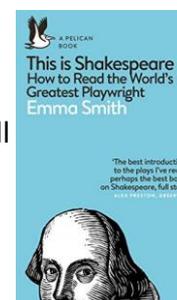
Gimson's Kings and Queens whirled us through the lives of our monarchs – from 1066 and William the Conqueror right up to Queen Elizabeth II and the present-day – to tell a tale of bastardy, courage, conquest, brutality, vanity, vulgarity, corruption, anarchy, absenteeism, piety, nobility, divorce, execution, civil war, madness, magnificence, profligacy, frugality, philately, abdication, dutifulness, family breakdown and family recovery.

Written in Andrew Gimson's inimitable style, and illustrated by Martin Rowson, Gimson's Kings and Queens is both a primer and a refresher for anyone who can't quite remember which were the good and bad Edwards or Henrys, or why so-and-so succeeded to the throne rather than his second cousin.

#### **This is Shakespeare by Emma Smith**

'The best introduction to the plays I've read, perhaps the best book on Shakespeare, full stop' Alex Preston, Observer

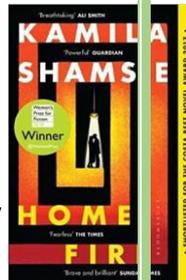
So much of what we say about Shakespeare is either not true, or just not relevant, deflecting us from investigating the challenges of his inconsistencies and flaws. This electrifying new book thrives on revealing, not resolving, the ambiguities of Shakespeare's plays and their changing topicality. It introduces an intellectually, theatrically and ethically exciting writer who engages with intersectionality as much as with Ovid, with economics as much as poetry: who writes in strikingly modern ways about individual agency, privacy, politics, celebrity and sex. It takes us into a world of politicking and copy-catting, as we



watch him emulating the blockbusters of Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd, the Spielberg and Tarantino of their day; flirting with and skirting round the cut-throat issues of succession politics, religious upheaval and technological change. The Shakespeare in this book poses awkward questions rather than offering bland answers, always implicating us in working out what it might mean.

### Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie

Isma is free. After years spent raising her twin siblings in the wake of their mother's death, she is finally studying in America, resuming a dream long deferred. But she can't stop worrying about Aneeka, her beautiful, headstrong sister back in London – or their brother, Parvaiz, who's disappeared in pursuit of his own dream: to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew.

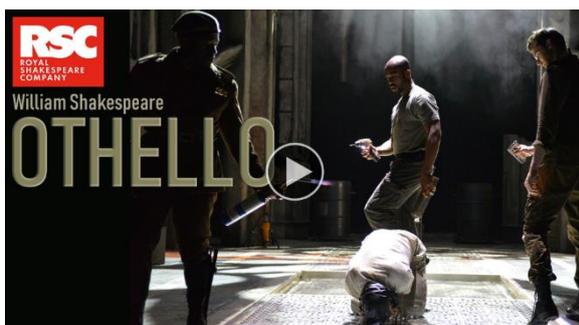


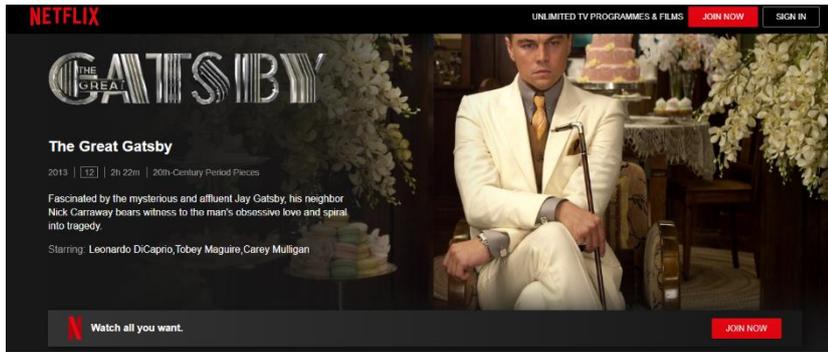
Then Eamonn enters the sisters' lives. Handsome and privileged, he inhabits a London worlds away from theirs. As the son of a powerful British Muslim politician, Eamonn has his own birthright to live up to – or defy. Is he to be a chance at love? The means of Parvaiz's salvation? Two families' fates are inextricably, devastatingly entwined in this searing novel that asks: what sacrifices will we make in the name of love?

A contemporary reimagining of Sophocles' Antigone, Home Fire is an urgent, fiercely compelling story of loyalties torn apart when love and politics collide – confirming Kamila Shamsie as a master storyteller of our times.

### Tragedy: Plays/Films

Go to this link for free viewing of RSC productions during the social isolation period and watch the two plays suggested below <https://www.marquee.tv/> (Each picture is a hyperlink direct to the production)





The Great Gatsby is available on Netflix.

## Tragedy: Podcasts

The images below are hyperlinks. There are plenty more in each series to listen to. This one is for Lord Byron, but I would also recommend the Mary Shelley one.

### You're Dead To Me



## University of Oxford: Approaching Shakespeare



## American History Tellers: Prohibition, Closing Time

