

# GETTING AHEAD

HS  
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ALTON

Start to develop skills that are relevant to your course before you join HSDC this September!

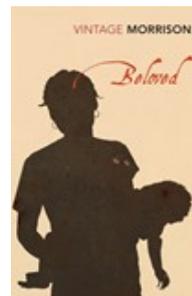
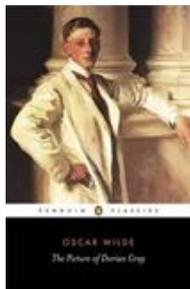
## English Literature – A Level

This course is staffed by passionate and enthusiastic lecturers who love their subject and sharing their knowledge. The study of Literature brings with it the opportunity to take on new perspectives, explore ideas, beliefs and values, challenge or discover your own and learn the literary skills to express yourself in original and creative ways. These are skills that will be useful throughout your life and any career you choose.

### Reading

In readiness for September please read:

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (1891) and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (1987)



Research on the American dream

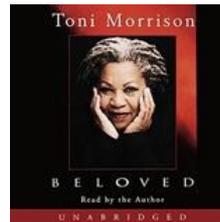
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp>

### Listening

These are two of the books you will be studying in the first term. There are also really good audio versions available, in particular *Beloved* being read by Toni Morrison.

**We look forward to seeing you in September!**

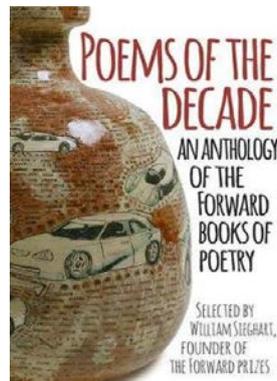
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These can be found on Audible, which is part of Amazon. Make sure you choose the unabridged versions! Other useful tools are the York Notes Advanced for both texts.

## Poetry

In your first term you will also be studying a selection of poems from the Forward Poetry Anthology. It would be useful to buy the anthology for yourself as you will also be expected to compare the ones you have studied with an unknown poem.



To help you remind yourself of the skills needed for the close reading of a poem (i.e. the detailed analysis of meaning, language, form and structure) we use the 'How a Poet Creates Meaning' sheet as a starting point to decide what we think the overarching meaning of the poem is. Try it out on the poem 'To My Nine Year Old Self', by Helen Dunmore, which is one of the ones we study. We'll share ideas when we see you next term.

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## HOW THE POET CREATES MEANING—APPROACHING AN UNSEEN POEM

### 1. Just look

*consider the title & consider the layout*

### 2. Slow reading

*Read in sentences – not lines.*

*Check your understanding of the vocabulary—look up words you do not know the meaning of and annotate accordingly.*

### 3. Content—5Ws

**Who? Characters/Narrative voice:** *Who is speaking? Who is being described? Who is being addressed?*

**What? What is the narrative/story? What actually happens?**

**When? Setting—Time:** *time of year? of day? Historical? Modern day?*

**Where? Setting—Place:** *specified? General?*

**Why? Initial thoughts:** *Why did it happen, do you think?*

### 4. Distant reading

*Summarise (briefly) each stanza/section.*

*This is where you are checking for **meaning** – do you (generally) understand the poem?*

*What is the **BIG IDEA** in this poem?*

*For example, Is it a comment on/reflection on death? relationships? time?*

### First response—three sentences:

- 1) What do you think the significance of the title is?
- 2) What is the meaning of the poem? Summarise in one sentence
- 3) Pick out a line, or phrase or word which you feel is significant. Explain your thinking.
- 4) Bring your ideas, written down, to the next lesson ready to discuss and share.

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## To My Nine-Year-Old Self

Helen Dunmore

You must forgive me. Don't look so surprised,  
perplexed, and eager to be gone,  
balancing on your hands or on the tightrope.  
You would rather run than walk, rather climb than run  
rather leap from a height than anything.

I have spoiled this body we once shared.  
Look at the scars, and watch the way I move,  
careful of a bad back or a bruised foot.  
Do you remember how, three minutes after waking  
we'd jump straight out of the ground floor window  
into the summer morning?

That dream we had, no doubt it's as fresh in your mind  
as the white paper to write it on.  
We made a start, but something else came up –  
a baby vole, or a bag of sherbet lemons –  
and besides, that summer of ambition  
created an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap  
and a den by the cesspit.

I'd like to say that we could be friends  
but the truth is we have nothing in common  
beyond a few shared years. I won't keep you then.  
Time to pick rosehips for tuppence a pound,  
time to hide down scared lanes  
from men in cars after girl-children,

or to lunge out over the water  
on a rope that swings from that tree  
long buried in housing –  
but no, I shan't cloud your morning. God knows  
I have fears enough for us both -  
I leave you in an ecstasy of concentration  
slowly peeling a ripe scab from your knee  
to taste it on your tongue.

## Collage work - take it further!

We sometimes unpack a poems' meaning through art, for example, making a collage of images which suggest the meaning of the poem. As part of our work on 'To My Nine Year Old Self' we ask you to remember what it was like being nine years old, so why not create a collage of images which tell us what you remember about that time. Use the poem for inspiration and include a picture of yourself if you wish!

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## Research

As part of your study of Literature you will be expected to undertake independent research into context. You will be familiar with this from GCSE. Below is a loose timeline of arts movements which shows roughly where the texts you study fit in:

Anglo-Saxon – 700-1066

**Medieval – 1066-1400** – *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Adapted Simon Armitage 2007) 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> year

**Renaissance – 1400-1600** – William Shakespeare (1604), 2<sup>nd</sup> year (either *Measure for Measure* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Civil War – 1639-1649

The Age of Enlightenment – 1700-1780

**Romantics – 1780-1830** – *Selected poems* John Keats, (1795-1821), 2<sup>nd</sup> year

**Victorians – 1830-1900** – *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde (1891) 1<sup>st</sup> year

**Modernist – 1900-1980** – *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams (1947)

**Post-Modern – 1945-2000** - *Beloved* Toni Morrison (1987) 1<sup>st</sup> year (compared with Wilde)

**Post 2000** – *Forward Poetry Anthology* 1<sup>st</sup> year

Find out some more about each of these movements. There's no need to do lots of writing, just be curious!

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## Watch

[BBC Four - Culture in Quarantine: Shakespeare, Othello](#)

Raising the Bar 100 Years of Black British Theatre and Screen - Lenny Henry on *Othello* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06nq1fd>

## And finally....

EMAG is a really useful resource which we use a lot to complement our study of Literature. They have produced a book of resources and tasks specifically designed to help you prepare for the delights (and challenge) of studying A Level. There's no need to work through the whole thing, but do dip into the articles and do a couple of the tasks - they will help you prepare for your study.

## Did You Know...

That we use Shakespeare's language every day?

'Aside from introducing an estimated 3,000 words into the English language, there are also everyday phrases the Bard coined that we still use today, 400 years later. The *British Council* report if it wasn't for Shakespeare we wouldn't be saying "heart of gold", "wild goose chase", "faint-hearted", "break the ice" or "love is blind".'

*The Independent* 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016

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