



A2 ENGLISH LITERATURE

LOVE THROUGH THE AGES

Non-Exam Assessment (NEA)
Independent critical study: Texts across time

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(Two exemplar student responses and a reading list accompany this guidance).

Texts across time is the non-exam assessment (NEA) component of A-level English Literature A specification. The specification is committed to the notion of autonomous personal reading and Texts across time provides students with the invaluable opportunity to work independently, follow their own interests and to develop their own ideas and meanings. To that end, few restrictions are placed on the student's freedom to choose their own texts and shape their own task but the following requirements must be met:

Key reminders

- Students write a comparative critical study of two texts on a theme of their choice
- An appropriate academic bibliography must be included
- An academic form of referencing must be used
- The word count is 2,500 words (not including quotations or academic bibliography)
- The task must be worded so that it gives access to all five assessment objectives (AOs)
- One text must have been written pre-1900
- Two different authors must be studied

- Equal attention must be paid to each text
- A-level core set texts and chosen comparative set texts listed for study in either Love through the ages or in Texts in shared contexts cannot be used for NEA
- Texts in translation, that have been influential and significant in the development of literature in English, can be used
- Poetry texts must be as substantial as a novel or a play. A poetry text could be either one longer narrative poem or a single authored collection of shorter poems. A discrete Chaucer Tale would be suitable as a text for study, as would a poem such as *The Rape of the Lock*. If students are using a collection of short poems, they must have studied the whole text and select at least two poems to write about in detail as examples of the wider collection
- Single authored collections of short stories are permissible. If students are using a collection of short stories, they must have studied the whole text and select at least two stories to write about in detail as examples of the wider collection eg. The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman cannot be studied alone.

Advice on text choice

Connecting two texts on a common theme means choosing two texts which maximise opportunities for writing about both similarities and differences. Whilst the only date requirement is that **one text must be written pre-1900**, the component title 'Texts across time' indicates that effective comparison and contrast occurs when the same theme is explored in two texts separated by a significant period of time; here the different contexts of production will inform the similarities and differences in approach taken by the writers to the chosen theme.

If, however, students are interested in writing about a theme within a clearly defined time period, it is advisable to consider how the study of texts from different genres will open up discussion of similarities and differences.

Both texts should be of sufficient weight and of suitable 'quality' for A-level study; the set text lists for the examined components help to exemplify what is meant by a substantial text, particularly in relation to selecting an appropriate amount of poetry for a poetry 'text'.

Texts chosen for study must maximise opportunities for writing about both similarities and differences.

Texts must allow access to a range of critical views and interpretations, including over time, which students can evaluate and apply autonomously.

Secondary sources, relevant to the texts, can include film and stage productions, books and articles.

NEA prohibited texts

Students cannot use the following texts for non-exam assessment as they appear on the exam set text lists.

A

Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
Jane Austen	<i>Persuasion</i>

B

Pat Barker	<i>Regeneration</i>
Pat Barker	<i>Life Class</i>
Barry Sebastian	<i>A Long, Long Way</i>
William Blake	<i>The Garden of Love</i>
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
Emily Brontë	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>
Robert Burns	<i>Song (Ae fond kiss)</i>
Lord Byron	<i>She Walks in Beauty</i>

C

Kate Chopin	<i>The Awakening</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
Wendy Cope	<i>After the Lunch</i>
Richard Curtis and Ben Elton	<i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i>

D

John Donne	<i>The Flea</i>
Keith Douglas	<i>Vergissmeinnict</i>
Ernest Dowson	<i>Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae</i>
Daphne Du Maurier	<i>Rebecca</i>
Carol Ann Duffy	<i>The Love Poem</i>
Carol Ann Duffy	<i>Feminine Gospels</i>

E

Ben Elton	<i>The First Casualty</i>

F

Sebastian Faulks	<i>Birdsong</i>
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
E. M. Forster	<i>A Room with a View</i>
Michael Frayn	<i>Spies</i>
Brian Friel	<i>Translations</i>
Robert Frost	<i>Love and a Question</i>

G

Brian Gardner, ed.	<i>Up the Line to Death</i>
Robert Graves	<i>Goodbye to All That</i>

H

David Haig	<i>My Boy Jack</i>
Thomas Hardy	<i>The Ruined Maid</i>
Thomas Hardy	<i>At an Inn</i>
Thomas Hardy	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i>
Tony Harrison	<i>Timer</i>
Tony Harrison	<i>Selected Poems (2013 edition)</i>
L. P. Hartley	<i>The Go-Between</i>
Seamus Heaney	<i>Punishment</i>
Seamus Heaney	<i>New Selected Poems (1966–1987)</i>
Ernest Hemingway	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i>
Susan Hill	<i>Strange Meeting</i>

Ted Hughes	<i>Birthday Letters</i>
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K

John Keats	<i>La Belle Dame sans Merci</i>
Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>

L

Philip Larkin	<i>Wild Oats</i>
Philip Larkin	<i>Talking in Bed</i>
Joan Littlewood	<i>Oh! What a Lovely War</i>
Richard Lovelace	<i>The Scrutiny</i>

M

Louis MacNeice	<i>Meeting Point</i>
Andrew Marvell	<i>To His Coy Mistress</i>
Ian McEwan	<i>Atonement</i>
Charlotte Mew	<i>A quoi bon dire</i>
Edna St. Vincent Millay	<i>I, being born a woman and distressed</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>All My Sons</i>
Paul Muldoon	<i>Long Finish</i>

P

Sylvia Plath	<i>Ariel</i>

R

Catherine Reilly, ed.	<i>Scars Upon My Heart</i>
Erich Maria Remarque	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>
Michael Symmons Roberts	<i>To John Donne</i>
Christina Rossetti	<i>Remember</i>
Arundhati Roy	<i>The God of Small Things</i>

S

Anne Sexton	<i>For My Lover, Returning to His Wife</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Othello</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Sonnet 116</i>
Owen Sheers	<i>Skirrid Hill</i>
R. C. Sherriff	<i>Journey's End</i>
Jon Stallworthy, ed.	<i>The Oxford Book of War Poetry</i>
Jon Stallworthy, ed.	<i>The War Poems of Wilfred Owen</i>
Kathryn Stockett	<i>The Help</i>
Graham Swift	<i>Waterland</i>

W

Alice Walker	<i>The Color Purple</i>
George Walter, ed.	<i>The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry</i>
Timberlake Wertenbaker	<i>Our Country's Good</i>
1Rebecca West	<i>The Return of the Soldier</i>
Peter Whelan	<i>The Accrington Pals</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>
John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester	<i>Oranges are not the Only Fruit</i>
Sir Thomas Wyatt	<i>Who so list to hount I knowe where is an hynde</i>

Y

Richard Yates	<i>Revolutionary Road</i>

Deciding on a Title

Once two texts are identified, which both address the student's chosen theme, a more defined focus for the essay is needed; this may arise, for example, from similarities and differences in genre (poetry, prose, drama), type (e.g. gothic fiction), contexts (e.g. of production and reception), authorial method (e.g. narrative structure or point of view), theoretical perspective (e.g. feminism). (The exemplar NEA response is a good example of how the wider theme of the role of women in the nineteenth-century has been more clearly defined in the focus on two specific relationships and the inclusion of a clear viewpoint - that 'the personal is political' - for consideration).

Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- crime and punishment
- minds under stress
- nostalgia and the past

- the gothic
- satire and dystopia
- war and conflict
- representations of race and ethnicity
- representations of sexuality
- representations of women
- representations of men
- representations of social class and culture

Combinations to consider as a starting point might therefore include:

- representations of men in *Vanity Fair* and *A Doll's House*
- the gothic in *Northanger Abbey* and Keats' poems ('*Lamia*', '*Isabella* or *The Pot of Basil*' and '*The Eve of St Agnes*')
- representations of social class and culture in *Middlemarch* and *She Stoops to Conquer*
- satire and dystopia in *Frankenstein* and *The School for Scandal*
- representations of women in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and '*The Wife of Bath's Tale*'

Clearly the texts mentioned above may be interchangeable with other texts suggested or with the student's own choice of texts (which may include one post-1900 text); the broad themes will undoubtedly be interchangeable with others but will need to be refined to identify a

more clearly defined comparative focus.

Meeting the Assessment Objectives - advice on task choice

Given that the NEA assesses all five assessment objectives (AOs), the task must allow access to them all.

It is worth considering how key terms in the task wording you choose enable different AOs to be accessed:

AO1: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

AO3: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of

the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

AO4: Explore connections across literary texts.

AO5: Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

Advice on writing the essay

Having completed the study of their chosen texts, researched secondary sources and devised an appropriate task, students will need to pull their ideas together into a coherent response. (Here again the exemplar NEA response offers an excellent example of how to structure a sophisticated argument and the moderator commentary explains how this student achieves this).

Some key points to note are:

- this is a connective task and so students should be prepared to make connections between their texts in terms of similarity and difference throughout the response;
- students should make the connections they wish to explore from a range including authorial method, context, genre and critical theory
- contexts and critical views should not be bolted on but instead should be woven through the response, evaluated as a way of reading the primary texts and then used as a stepping-stone into the

development of an interesting and persuasive personal overview

- well-selected, concise quotations should be embedded and adapted to the student's own syntax and required meaning
- a bibliography and academic referencing are required to indicate the secondary sources used by the student during the writing of their essay.

Teacher supervision of students' work

It is worthwhile emphasising that the teacher must confirm that each essay submitted is the work of the individual student.

In accordance with guidance, the following support **would not be acceptable:**

- having reviewed the candidate's work, giving detailed advice and suggestions as to how the work may be improved in order to meet the assessment criteria
- giving detailed indications of errors or omissions which leave the candidate no opportunity for individual initiative
- giving advice on specific improvements needed to meet the assessment criteria
- providing writing frames specific to the task (e.g. outlines, paragraph headings or section headings)
- intervening personally to improve presentation or content of work.

