

## Advanced Study in English 4 Summer Exhibition Reading

The pages below include course descriptions and required summer reading exhibition books for Advanced Study in English 4 (VI Form English). Your teacher will be contacting you regarding which course you are enrolled in.

Work on the Senior Exhibition begins this summer with a careful reading of your designated Exhibition texts below. Please note that **you are required to have completed all three books upon your return to campus in August** (your first major assessment in September will be on all three texts you have read.)

Please read these Exhibition texts thoroughly, carefully and actively: you should be reading with an eye for detail, paying close attention to language, noting central patterns, recurring themes, and thinking about possible questions that you may want to investigate in your Senior Exhibition essay. In short, you should read as you have been taught to read in your English classes at St. Andrew's.

If for some reason you are having trouble locating a copy of one or more of your exhibition texts, please email your teacher a.s.a.p. (You cannot afford to begin the year without having completed this reading: success on the exhibition project depends in large part on the quality of this summer preparation.)

### A couple of important reminders:

\* Honor issue: all secondary sources (introductions to texts, on-line sources, cliff notes etc....) are **strictly off-limits.**

\* Viewing a film version of your text is no substitute for reading it. Films usually modify the original text, adapt it, and interpret it, often in ways that either limit, distort, or flatten the rich complexities of the original (and it is these complexities that we want you engaging in your essays). For that reason, we ask that you not view the movie version until you have completed the project.

Finally, please do not hesitate to email your teacher if you have any questions or concerns about any of the above. We are excited to work with you next year.

## **Ian McEwan's Fiction**

This course looks closely at the fiction of Ian McEwan, one of the great contemporary writers. McEwan won the Booker Prize, England's highest literary award, for *Amsterdam* (1998); the acclaim for his two recent novels, *Atonement* (2002) and *Saturday* (2005), was similarly outstanding.

Students examine McEwan's early writings, in which he developed a reputation for exploring the dark side of humanity and initially labeled in the press as "Ian the Macabre." They also read some of his short stories, and then three of his early novels, *Black Dogs*, *Amsterdam* and *The Child in Time*. After exhibitions, they will read his most recent novel, *On Chesil Beach*.

Some of the guiding questions for the course include:

- What is McEwan's style and focus? How has his style and characterization developed over the past twenty years?
- What does McEwan write about?
- What are his prevailing, developing concerns as an artist?
- How do we define his early works? How do they connect to his current writings?
- What makes McEwan an important, provocative, original writer?

Exhibition texts and required summer reading for this course are McEwan's three major novels, *Enduring Love*, *Atonement* and *Saturday*.

## **An Exploration of Truth and Perception: A Study of Narration**

The Talmud says, “We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are,” an important wisdom to remember as we try to bridge truth and human experience across the narration of these stories. Each work in this course exposes a tension between perception and the elusive truth.

This course begins with an intense study of conventional narrative structure, a theory students will apply to every work we read. Students will have three mini-exhibitions before their Senior Exhibition. Possible texts to be studied in class include Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno* and *Billy Budd*, Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, James Joyce’s *The Dead*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*.

Exhibition texts and required summer reading for this course are Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*, Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses*, and Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*.

## **Crafted Selves: Narrative Portraits and the Problem of Identity**

This course explores the role and shape of narratives as vehicles for crafting notions of self and identity. How do narratives function as portraits? As self-portraits? Students draw on some examples from the visual arts, but their main focus is on the ways in which narratives represent and enact the complexities and perhaps even the limits of psychological portraiture.

Exhibition texts and required summer reading for this course are Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, David Bradley's *The Chaneyville Incident*.

## **Ambiguity and *Jouissance*: Narrative from the Modern to the Postmodern**

Seeking to break from convention – first from the constrictions of chronology and unified narration, then from all traditional bonds of literary genre and style – authors began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to challenge not only the way that we read literature, but the way that we see our cultures, languages, and selves. The goal of this course is twofold: to explore the development (or deconstruction) of narrative in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to gain a basic familiarity with the difficult and often elusive terminology of literary theory.

Texts will be drawn from the following: Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (excerpts), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Jose Luis Borges's *Ficciones*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, and Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*.

Exhibition texts and and required summer reading for this course are Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*.

## **The Power of a Story**

The literature in this course explores how storytelling can shape perception of the past and give power over experience. Works such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Ian McEwan's *Atonement* capture the intersections of present and past, as their characters tell and listen to stories and wrestle with the repercussions of their histories. These texts require their readers to look carefully at who is telling the story and how the story is told; to consider how memories and stories permeate consciousness; and to explore how entering a story can help us transcend our past or present lives. Students will look closely at form and narrative structure in a variety of works, as they explore the importance of storytelling in their lives. Course texts may include *In the Lake of the Woods* by Tim O'Brien, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *Storyteller* by Leslie Marmon Silko, "Carried Away" by Alice Munro, *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner, *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston, and others.

Exhibition texts and required summer reading for this course are Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, and David Guterson *Snow Falling on Cedars*.

## Contemporary Fiction: An Inquiry

This course is an inquiry into the state of contemporary fiction in English (and some translated works). The syllabus will be drawn almost exclusively from “literary” magazines and journals: *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s*, *Granta*, *McSweeney’s*, and *The Paris Review*. Students consider such questions as the following:

- What is a “good” story and what kind of assumptions about literature inform our evaluation of individual stories?
- What are the principle themes and concerns of contemporary fiction at this historical moment?
- What kinds of fiction are presently being published?
- What formal techniques and conventions do writers use to capture contemporary experience?

We will read as real readers read—by which I mean we will read with an eye to what we like and what we don’t like—and we will write regularly and in detail about our reactions to individual stories, using these reactions as a way to explore and flesh out our own assumptions about what makes (or unmakes) a good story. In this way the course is not simply an inquiry into the contemporary literary landscape, but also an inquiry into our own literary preferences and prejudices, as well as an opportunity to refine, sharpen and revise them. I take it as axiomatic that formal literary analysis will be most powerful, probing and persuasive when it is responsive to and grounded in the kinds of pleasures a story is designed to elicit or (as is sometimes the case) frustrate.

Students, often working in groups, will draw on their own reading to help shape the syllabus and determine which stories we will discuss.

We will also occasionally read works of criticism, again, drawn from literary periodicals, on the state of contemporary fiction as a way of exploring and making explicit the standards, assumptions and methods of analysis/reading professional critics bring to their work.

Texts will include a subscription to *The New Yorker*; *Granta 100*, Winter 2007; *The Art of Fiction* by David Lodge; *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein; and a course reader.

### Exhibition: The Anthology Project

Because this is a course principally on the short form (the best way to take stock of the many kinds of fiction being written today), the Exhibition in this course will take a slightly different form. Rather than focusing on a single novel or play, each student will do the following:

- carefully select three stories—a kind of mini-anthology—from the readings I will ask you to do over the summer;
- explain why you chose the stories you did and articulate a compelling principle (formal, thematic or other) of selection;

- make an argument explaining how they relate, compare, or complement one another and how you would teach them.

**Required summer reading includes:**

- *Best American Short Stories of 2006*, ed. Ann Patchett. Read all stories, and, once you are finished, the “Introduction.”
- *The New Yorker*, summer fiction issue (June 6 & 16, 2008). Please read the stories by Vladimir Nabokov, Annie Proulx and Mary Gaitskill and all of the pieces in the section entitled “Faith and Doubt” (Uwen Akpan, Tobias Wolff, Edwidge Danticat, Mohammed Naseehu Ali, Allegra Goodman, George Saunders).
- *McSweeney’s*, Volume 26. This volume is composed of three short books. You should read the two entitled, New Stories from Overseas and New Stories from Our Shores. It can be purchased at:  
[http://store.mcsweeney.net/index.cfm/fuseaction/catalog.detail/object\\_id/7e3092c7-bdf7-4966-87b1-2870ee02f922/McSweeneyIssue26.cfm](http://store.mcsweeney.net/index.cfm/fuseaction/catalog.detail/object_id/7e3092c7-bdf7-4966-87b1-2870ee02f922/McSweeneyIssue26.cfm)

**Reader’s Notebook (summer assignment):**

I want you to approach your summer reading with an adventurous spirit. You may not like all of the stories you read, and you will certainly like some more than others. These reactions are important, and I expect you to keep track of and document them. You may do this in the books themselves, but I would strongly suggest you keep a separate notebook detailing your reactions. Your initial, gut reaction to a story is invaluable, the bedrock on which you can build a more thoughtful and rigorous analysis – but it is also fleeting. Once lost, it is difficult to recover, so it is essential that you record it soon after you read the story.

As you record your reactions you should consider the following questions:

- What did I enjoy – or not enjoy -- about this story? (Was it funny, moving, powerful?)
- What was different about this story?
- What puzzled me about this story? (Be specific.)
- What did I make of the ending?
- Does it remind me of other stories I have read?

When you return to school in the fall, I will want to see your notebooks, and I will expect you to be able to identify your three favorite stories and your three least favorite stories and offer a preliminary justification of these selections. Your first major assignment will be to offer an argument in defense of a story you did not at first like.