

A level English Literature Summer Independent Learning 2025

Welcome to A-Level English Literature. Please complete the following tasks ready for your first day at New College:

Part 1: Compulsory tasks

1. Read the poem below and annotate, identifying any technical decisions the poet has made in terms of language, structure and form, and how these decisions affect the possible meaning of the poem:

Ash

I had a heart like an upturned ashtray.

I spoke smoke. People held their breath.
When I found you, ash was all
I had to pile at your feet.

I did not know what you would do
with my dire, dirtying heart
crumbled there, burning.

Would you brush it off, blow it out,
heap it, beating, in your palm
offend the wind with it?

No, you found soil, seeded it.
You poured my heart in, stirred
what I had wasted. And we waited.

Now here's a sapling. Soon, an ash tree.

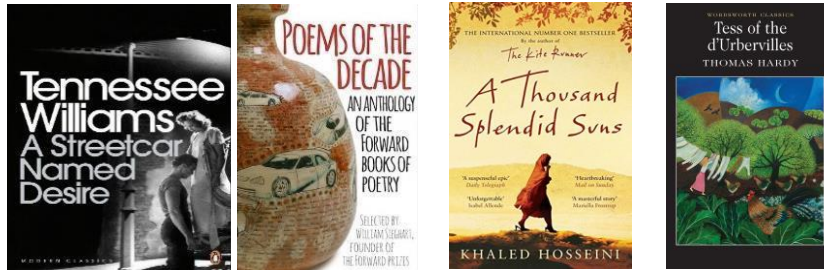
2. You need to purchase the following texts for the first term:

A Streetcar named Desire (ISBN: 9780141190273)

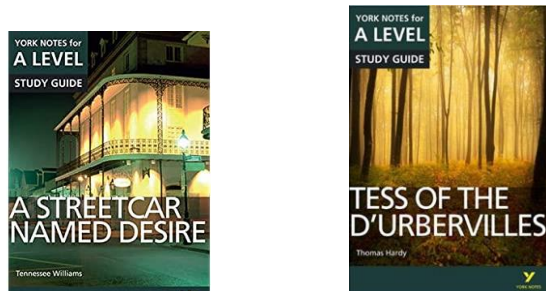
Poems of the Decade (ISBN: 9780571325405)

A Thousand Splendid Suns (ISBN: 978-1526604750)

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (ISBN: 978-1853260056)



3. We would also advise you to purchase the 'York Notes for A-Level' study guides for 'A Streetcar Named Desire', and 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles'.



4. Read Scene 1 of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams. You might also watch a production on YouTube if you would like to see it in performance, but this should be done in addition to, not instead of, the reading task. Refer to the 'A Streetcar Named Desire Initial Reading Notes', below. You should:

- summarise the scene in brief, bullet-point form
- select two pieces of textual evidence from each page and describe in detail the effect created by Williams with the use of each piece of evidence. Your evidence can be dialogue or stage directions such as use of sound, staging, props, costume or proxemics. You might want to consider tone, lexis, connotations, symbolism and imagery, depending on the quotation selected.

***A Streetcar Named Desire* Initial Reading Notes**

For your 'exploration of effects', you might want to consider:

- the impression your chosen quotation gives of emerging or developing themes, and how it does this
- the impression your chosen quotation gives of character, and how this may relate to developing or emerging themes, and how it does this
- the impression your chosen quotation gives of setting, and how this may relate to developing or emerging themes, and how it does this
- the impression your chosen quotation gives of relationships, and how this may relate to developing or emerging themes, and how it does this

Of course, many quotations may show a combination of these.

Bullet point summary of Scene One	2 pieces of textual evidence (for each page) and exploration of effects

Create and complete your own version of the above table.

Part 2: Additional tasks

- 1) Watch the following Youtube link, making notes about the context of the text:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKiglgStwRs>
- 2) Produce an essay of at least 600 words in answer to the following question:
 Explore Williams' presentation of Blanche OR Stanley in the first scene of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, making reference to contextual factors (use the above YouTube link to help)

You could consider:

- Our initial introduction to the character
- How they are presented in terms of clothing, colour, and any props they interact with
- What they say, and stage directions which tell us how they say it