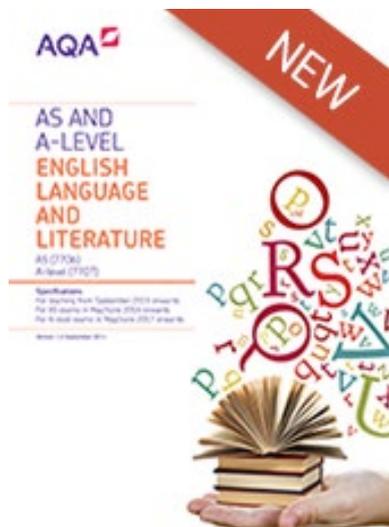


The Friary Sixth Form



English Language and Literature Summer Project Pack 2023



Summer Tasks



Paper 1: This unit has been covered in Year 12.

Paper 2: This unit is assessed through examination of new texts. You should purchase and read your own copies of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and 'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams.

This bridging unit will help you to make a start on the skills needed for these units.

Task 1: Set Texts

Purchase and read your new set texts, 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and *The Great Gatsby*. Write a summary of each scene/chapter of each of these texts.

Task 2: A Streetcar Named Desire

We have already read scene one together in class. Use your notes from scene one to answer the following essay question: 'How is Blanche presented in scene one?' You get 1 hour 10 minutes in the exam, so you would be expected to write at least 3 pages of A4. You do not need to time yourself because it is your first essay on 'A Streetcar Named Desire'.

Follow this structure:

Introduction: An overview of how Blanche is presented in scene one.

Main section: Use the planning sheet we filled in together in school to work through the key quotations and explain what they reveal about Blanche. Just like with Frankenstein and the poetry, you **MUST** analyse sub-classes of words and sentence types in **EVERY** quotation that you discuss. You **MUST** also make **LOTS** of contextual references: use the 'Streetcar context' booklet that I gave you earlier this term.

Conclusion: Your opinion of Blanche and why she behaves in the manner that she does in scene one.

TASK 3: The Great Gatsby Recast

Writing about Society: Students will study *The Great Gatsby* and will create an analysis of how Fitzgerald talks about the society he lives in. This will lead to a piece of re-creative writing based on the source material and an accompanying commentary. You will need to purchase your own copy of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Use the summer holiday to read the entire text, in preparation for September.

Recast and Commentary Tasks

1. Read Chapter One from, "I'm p-paralysed with happiness" to, "We heard it from three people, so it must be true." Here the narrator recalls his first visit to the Buchanan mansion.

Recast this description into a diary account of Nick's visit from **Daisy's** point of view.

You should write about 300 words.

In your transformation you should consider:

- Details about Daisy's lifestyle and the confidences shared with Nick Carraway
- The relationship between Daisy and Tom
- Attitudes expressed about West Egg and Gatsby

2. Write a commentary explaining the decisions you have made in transforming the base text for this new account and the effects of reshaping Fitzgerald's original description.

You should write about 200 words.

In your commentary you should:

- consider how you have used language to shape your intended meaning
- demonstrate the connections between the base text and your transformed text
- structure your writing clearly to express your ideas.

Additional Reading/ Supporting Resources



The Socio-Historical Contexts of 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and *The Great Gatsby*

Find a suitable way to record the information you learn in this section, such as a mind map, a table or a bullet-point list.

'A Streetcar Named Desire'

- Watch [this](#) video to help you understand the historical, literary and biographical context of the play.
- Listen to the podcast about Tennessee Williams' life [here](#).
- Read through the article about New Orleans below. You can also watch [this](#) video to see what New Orleans was like at the time of Williams' writing.

New Orleans in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' – Its Significance and Symbolism

When Blanche DuBois arrives in the French Quarter of New Orleans, carrying a valise and dressed, 'as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party', she could not be more out of place. Williams' stage direction that Blanche's 'appearance is incongruous to this setting' understates her inability to adapt, not only to her circumstances, but to the bustling and unique world of New Orleans itself.

Colonial New Orleans

Founded by the French in 1718, New Orleans developed around the French Quarter or 'Vieux Carré', meaning 'Old Square'. Being one of the oldest (and thus, most established) parts of the city, the French Quarter is at the heart of New Orleans and of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It has, in Williams' words, a 'spirit and life' of its own and the tinny sound of the 'blue piano', heard everywhere in this neighbourhood, 'expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here'. Historically, New Orleans has had many cultural influences. The French ceded it to the Spanish for forty years in 1763 and, shortly after its return to the French, it was sold to the United States, in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. There would have been many French and Spanish colonial buildings but most of these were destroyed in fires in 1788 and 1794 – it is likely, then, that most of the architecture which Blanche encounters would date from American rule.

Nonetheless, the buildings which create the 'atmosphere of decay', in the opening scene of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, are, unmistakably, colonial in style. These are 'mostly white frame, weathered grey' houses

with 'quaintly ornamented gables'. These suggest French colonial style and are outmoded, much like the way of life of the wealthy plantation owners of the Southern states of America. It is significant that Williams draws attention to these edifices as they correspond to the social background of Blanche and Stella. Whatever sentimentality the buildings may evoke in an observer – and Williams admitted to longing for the lost genteel life of the South – they must now adapt to the world that they are in and serve as apartment blocks for working people. If they do not adapt – and an analogy can be drawn with Blanche – they are useless and an obstruction to others.

The Experience of the Town

Williams moved to New Orleans at the age of 28, ready to immerse himself in the cultural life of the city. He took on, permanently, his college nickname of 'Tennessee', given to him because of his Southern accent and the state in which his father was born. From his apartment overlooking the French Quarter, he was perfectly placed to take in the blend of sounds, sights and smells that create the setting for *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The shouting of street vendors, selling tamales and flowers, the whooping of men returning from a hard day's work, the chatting of women as they go about their chores and the frequent and violent quarrelling of couples, all blend into a raucous backdrop of blues and jazz for which New Orleans is famous.

Williams offers a sensual appreciation of the Quarter as we 'almost feel the warm breath of the brown river' and smell, faintly, 'bananas and coffee'. The sky is 'a peculiarly tender blue', suggesting a vulnerability amidst the chaos, along with 'a kind of lyricism'. Williams' use of expressionism – or 'poetic realism' as he called it – allows him to create a whole experience of life in the city, based around what is seen, heard, smelt and evoked as much as what is played out between the characters. There may be challenges in staging all of this for an audience but Williams brings this deep appreciation of the character of New Orleans to those who read the script.

Music and Popular Culture

It is particularly telling that Blanche, who prides herself on her sensitivity and sense of culture, never acknowledges the atmosphere of the neighbourhood, aside from calling it a 'horrible place'. New Orleans, in the late nineteenth century, was a hub for artists and writers, drawn to cheap rents and the 'raffish charm' that Williams describes. Even in 1947, there was enough to inspire an artistic temperament. Music, in New Orleans, was a symbol of communication and integration, with the city producing such jazz legends as Louis Armstrong. Blanche, however, never comments on the music that is playing 'always just around the corner', hearing instead the polka from within her own mind and her troubled past. Her eyes and ears are closed to the reality of New Orleans and the popular culture of her sister's new home. Doggedly holding onto her own cultural references – operas, dances and poetry – she does not take the opportunity to embrace the modern New Orleans, where 'high culture' is incongruous and irrelevant. Blanche demonstrates a snobbery that

seems to impress Mitch but grates with Stanley and, in her rejection of the reality of this new world, we see a wider rejection of reality and an attempt to hold onto what is no longer of value.

World War II

The Second World War brought thousands of servicemen and new workers to New Orleans, adding to the already diverse culture of the city. Stanley is one of these many 'foreigners' in Blanche's eyes. People of many origins – Polish, Irish, Dutch and Italian, to name a few – became inhabitants of New Orleans alongside the European and African-American populations. When Blanche insists on calling Stanley a 'Polack', she demonstrates a rejection of the very nature of this unique city, focusing on difference rather than unity. Stanley, who has fought for his country, is proud to be American. He sees his place in society threatened by Blanche, whose values grate with the ideal of the 'American Dream', which promised that success is attainable through effort and hard work, rather than being dependent on social connections and privilege.

The Great Gatsby

- Listen to [this](#) podcast about the novel and its context.
- Read the information below and make sure you understand the terms Jazz Age, The Roaring Twenties and Prohibition.

Context and reception

Set in what was called the Jazz Age (a term popularized by Fitzgerald), or the Roaring Twenties, *The Great Gatsby* vividly captures its historical moment: the economic boom of post-war America, the new jazz music, the free-flowing illegal liquor. As Fitzgerald later remarked in an essay about the era, it was "a whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure." The brazenly lavish culture of West Egg reflects the new prosperity that was possible during Prohibition, when illegal schemes involving the black-market selling of liquor abounded. Such criminal enterprises are the source of Gatsby's income and finance his incredible parties, which are probably based on parties Fitzgerald himself attended when he lived on Long Island in the early 1920s.

Fitzgerald finished *The Great Gatsby* in early 1925 while he was living in France, and Scribner's published it in April of the same year. Fitzgerald struggled considerably in choosing a title, toying with *Trimalchio* and *Under the Red, White and Blue*, among others; he was never satisfied with the title *The Great Gatsby*, under which it was ultimately published. The illustration for the dust jacket was commissioned by Fitzgerald's editor Maxwell Perkins seven months before he was in possession of the finished manuscript. It was designed by Francis Cugat, a Spanish-born artist who did Hollywood movie posters, and depicts the eyes of a woman hanging over the carnival lights of Coney Island. The design was

well-loved by Fitzgerald, and he claimed in a letter to Perkins that he had written it into the book, though whether this refers to the eyes of Doctor Eckleburg or something else is uncertain. Cugat's painting is now one of the most well-known and celebrated examples of jacket art in American literature.

While Fitzgerald considered *The Great Gatsby* to be his greatest achievement at the time it was published, the book was neither a critical nor commercial success upon publication. Reviews were mixed, and the 20,000 copies of its first printing sold slowly. It was printed one more time during Fitzgerald's life, and there were still copies unsold from this second printing when he died in 1940. The novel was rediscovered a few years later and enjoyed an exponential growth in popularity in the 1950s, soon becoming a standard text of high-school curricula.