

## Y12 English Literature Induction Work - Summer 2024

Hello lovely future Year 12 Literature students! We're so pleased to have you! Please find below all you need to be super-successful with your summer induction work.

Your induction work focuses on tragedy, as this is the genre that underpins all our work in Year 12. There are FIVE TASKS to complete ahead of September, and an overview of these is in the table below (so grab a drink/snacks and read on!):

Task:	Overview:
One	Record your initial thoughts on 'tragedy' and the connotations of this term/its usage.
Two	Watch the incredible play 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and note down moments of tragedy/their effect (login details to follow!)
Three	Watch 'Antigone' (two plays, you lucky ducks!) and again note down moments of tragedy/their effect.
Four	Compare the aspects of tragedy present in both plays.
Five	Write an essay (with our support!) based on the tragic aspects present in an extract from 'A Streetcar Named Desire'.


The deadline for these tasks to be completed by is **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**. Sticking to this deadline is important as you'll be reviewing your summer work in one of your first lessons that week, so don't forget to bring your notes with you to those introductory lessons.

If you have any questions over the summer, please do drop Ms Bingham an email ([egb@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:egb@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk)), but if not - good luck and we look forward to discussing all your wonderful thoughts and ideas about tragedy in September.

## TASK ONE:

What makes something 'tragic'? What are the connotations of the word tragedy and what type of situations - if any - is it reserved for? In order for tragedy to occur, what groups of people need to be involved?

Take a look at the images below and write your thoughts on tragedy, using the questions above to support you.

 **tragedy**  
/'trædʒɪdi/  
*noun*

1. an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe.



**Jacob Medeiros** @Drawing\_Jacob · 16h  
Duck of the Day got deleted. As y'all know, this is a **tragic** loss for all of Twitter. Please reply to this tweet with your favorite duck image as a display of solidarity for our fallen hero. I'll start:



**izzy** @izzy\_ · 5h  
y'all got school tomorrow? **tragic**

  48  53 



**Justin Trudeau** @JustinTrudeau · Aug 18  
**Tragic** news from Kerala, India - Canada sends its deepest condolences to all those who have lost a loved one in the devastating floods. Our thoughts are with everyone affected.



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## TASK TWO:

The Greeks are credited with creating the tragic genre back in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC, and whilst that was a realllly long time ago, many modern playwrights and authors continue to create texts that are tragic at their core.

One such text is Tennessee Williams' 1947 incredible play, 'A Streetcar named Desire.' The play dramatises the experiences of Blanche DuBois, a Southern Belle

whose sudden change in fortune sees her leave her once-prosperous situation to move into a shabby apartment in New York rented by her younger sister Stella and brother-in-law Stanley, where things only become more dangerous and destructive for Blanche.

Use the school's login details below to access the play via Drama Online. Whilst watching, identify ten moments within the play that you feel are tragic and explain why in your own notes. Think particularly about characterisation, structure, relationships and fate/fortune.

Our access details from Drama Online are:

<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/series/national-theatre-collection-iid-190464>

Username: 6Uh&3Kj-

Password: 8Eg'4Ea&

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### TASK THREE:

We're now going to complete the same task but with a play that was written at the height of Greek tragic performance.

'Antigone' is the final play in a triad written by Sophocles that detail the rise and fall of Oedipus as he gains and then loses power due to mistakenly killing his father and marrying his mother. 'Antigone' begins after Oedipus' exile, where there has been a battle for power between his two sons. They both die, resulting in Creon - Oedipus' brother-in-law - taking control.

The play opens with Antigone - Creon's niece and Oedipus' daughter - expressing a wish to bury her dead brother Polynices. Creon has decided that only one of the brothers was honourable enough to receive a proper burial, leaving Polynices' supposedly traitorous body to rot. Antigone puts her life at risk to defiantly stand against Creon.

Use the school's login details above to access the play via Drama Online. Whilst watching, identify ten moments within the play that you feel are tragic and explain why in your own notes. Think particularly about characterisation, structure, relationships and fate/fortune.

**Psst...**Your next task is about comparing aspects of tragedy present within the two plays, so you may wish to have this in mind whilst you watch.

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#### TASK FOUR:

You have now watched two different plays that are both considered to be fundamental examples of the tragic genre. Yet they were written thousands of years apart.

In your notes and using your work from tasks 1-3 to help you, compare the aspects of tragedy present. Consider:

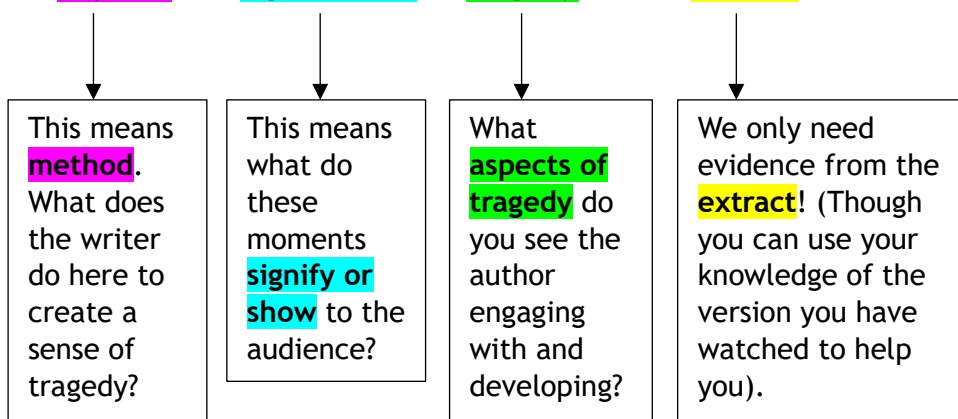
- Do they engage with similar / different aspects of tragedy?
  - How might they approach certain aspects of tragedy in similar / different ways?
  - What key themes did both plays explore? Was there any overlap?
  - How were these aspects and themes conveyed? (Think about method here)
  - How did the authors develop tragedy across their plays? Did they use similar strategies?
  - What was the outcome of these plays, both for the characters in the story and the audience?
  - 'Antigone' was written when tragedy as a genre was first conceptualised; does that make it more 'tragic' than 'Streetcar'? Why / why not?
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#### TASK FIVE:

Now we have a broad understanding of what the tragic genre is all about, it's time to see if we can use our new-found wisdom to write an essay. Don't panic! We will guide you through it step by step.

Below is an extract from 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. You will be using this extract to answer the question:

Explore the significance of tragedy in this extract.



Start by reading the extract below once through. All you need to consider at this stage is **what is actually happening in this moment.**

In the final scene of the play, Blanche's bags are being packed by Stella and her neighbour Eunice - who agree she can't stay after her accusation against Stanley (despite it being true). The trauma of the sexual assault has broken Blanche and whilst she believes she is leaving to join her millionaire, she is actually being taken to a mental asylum. In this extract, Blanche's realisation shatters her already fragile delusions.

DOCTOR: How do you do?

BLANCHE: You are not the gentleman I was expecting. *[She suddenly gasps and starts back up the steps. She stops by Stella, who stands just outside the door, and speaks in a frightening whisper.]* That man isn't Shep Huntleigh.

*The "Varsouviana" is playing distantly.*

*Stella stares back at Blanche. Eunice is holding Stella's arm. There is a moment of silence--no sound but that of Stanley steadily shuffling the cards.*

*Blanche catches her breath again and slips back into the flat with a peculiar smile, her eyes wide and brilliant. As soon as her sister goes past her, Stella closes her eyes and clenches her hands. Eunice throws her arms comforting about her. Then she starts up to her flat. Blanche stops just inside the door. Mitch keeps staring down at his hands on the table, but the other men look at her curiously. At last she starts around the table toward the bedroom. As she does, Stanley suddenly pushes back his chair and rises as if to block her way. The Matron follows her into the flat.*

STANLEY: Did you forget something?

BLANCHE *[shrilly]*: Yes! Yes, I forgot something!

*She rushes past him into the bedroom. Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The "Varsouviana" is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle. Blanche seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself.*

STANLEY: Doc, you better go in.

DOCTOR *[motioning to the Matron]*: Nurse, bring her out.

*The Matron advances on one side, Stanley on the other. Divested of all the softer properties of womanhood, the Matron is a peculiarly sinister figure in her severe dress. Her voice is bold and toneless as a firebell.*

MATRON: Hello, Blanche.

*The greeting is echoed and re-echoed by other mysterious voices behind the walls, as if reverberated through a canyon of rock.*

STANLEY: She says that she forgot something.

*The echo sounds in threatening whispers.*

MATRON: That's all right.

STANLEY: What did you forget, Blanche?

BLANCHE: I--I--

MATRON: It don't matter. We can pick it up later.

STANLEY: Sure. We can send it along with the trunk.

BLANCHE [*retreating in panic*]: I don't know you--I don't know you. I want to be--left alone--please!

MATRON: Now, Blanche!

ECHOES [*rising and falling*]: Now, Blanche--now, Blanche--now, Blanche!

STANLEY: You left nothing here but spilt talcum and old empty perfume bottles--unless it's the paper lantern you want to take with you. You want the lantern?

*He crosses to dressing table and seizes the paper lantern, tearing it off the light bulb, and extends it toward her. She cries out as if the lantern was herself. The Matron steps boldly toward her. She screams and tries to break past the Matron. All the men spring to their feet. Stella runs out to the porch, with Eunice following to comfort her, simultaneously with the confused voices of the men in the kitchen. Stella rushes into Eunice's embrace on the porch.*

STELLA: Oh, my God, Eunice help me! Don't let them do that to her, don't let them hurt her! Oh, God, oh, please God, don't hurt her! What are they doing to her? What are they doing? [*She tries to break from Eunice's arms.*]

EUNICE: No, honey, no, no, honey. Stay here. Don't go back in there. Stay with me and don't look.

STELLA: What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?

EUNICE: You done the right thing, the only thing you could do. She couldn't stay here; there wasn't no other place for her to go.

*While Stella and Eunice are speaking on the porch the voices of the men in the kitchen overlap them.*

STANLEY: [*running in from the bedroom*]: Hey! Hey! Doctor! Doctor, you better go in!

DOCTOR: Too bad, too bad. I always like to avoid it.

PABLO: This is a very bad thing.

STEVE: This is no way to do it. She should've been told.

*Mitch has started toward the bedroom. Stanley crosses to block him.*

MITCH [*wildly*]: You! You done this, all o' your God damn interfering with things you --

STANLEY: Quit the blubber! [*He pushes him aside.*]

MITCH: I'll kill you! [*He lunges and strikes at Stanley. Stanley pushes Mitch back.*]

*Mitch collapses at the table, sobbing.*

*During the preceding scenes, the Matron catches hold of Blanche's arm and prevents her flight. Blanche turns wildly and scratches at the Matron. The heavy woman pinions her arms. Blanche cries out hoarsely and slips to her knees.*

**A) Write an overview of the extract**, literally detailing who is on stage and what is happening (it's just within the extract, not the whole play).

Believe it or not, you've just written an undoubtedly wonderful introduction to an extract-style A-Level question! Woop!

Now we would like you to read the extract again, this time with your pen and highlighter in your hand. As you read, identify **how** the author is creating tragedy literally on stage. To do this, you need to think about **dramatic method**.

Dramatic method includes things like:

- Setting
- Proxemics (space between characters)
- Levels / height (standing, kneeling)
- Who dominates the dialogue?
- Silent characters?
- Sounds
- Characters present / notably absent
- Motifs (images, phrases, themes...)
- Character relationships - who is talking to who (and what they represent)
- Soliloquy / asides
- Stage directions
- Order of who enters the stage
- Exits
- The words that the characters say:
  - Questions
  - Repetition
  - Imperatives
  - Interruptions
- Implicit stage directions
- The start vs the end

**Remember:** you can't just method-spot! How do these moments create a sense of tragedy? Not all aspects will be present in the extract you've been given either, so work with what is there and what stands out to you the most.

**B) We have written the first paragraph of your essay for you. Have a read of our paragraph and annotate:**

- What aspect(s) of tragedy have we engaged with?
- How do we use evidence to support our ideas?
- How do we engage with **dramatic method**?

**Explore the significance of tragedy in this extract.**

In Blanche's desperate final moments of freedom, Williams' heightens the tragedy by using stage directions to highlight the futility of her resistance. As Stanley follows Blanche into her bedroom, it describes how she 'seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself.' Both her vulnerability and fear are clear in this moment as her defensive position, and the panic with which she 'seizes' a physical object to block herself, confirms how understandably frightened she is to be confronted in her personal space by her abuser. The

setting becomes increasingly claustrophobic as the Matron's words are 'echoed and re-echoed' around the space, pinning Blanche in even further. Our pity for Blanche's character only increases as her desperation rises and we see how futile her attempts to avoid being sectioned become. It is devastating to see a once verbose character like Blanche reduced to only a few confused words - 'I - I' - and then silence. Once physically restrained and with no voice to defend herself, Blanche "turns wildly and scratches at the Matron", this stage direction compounding Blanche's desperate need to remain free. Stanley's recent assault - and her sister's refusal to believe her - have already silenced and ultimately trapped Blanche, and the feral, savage description of her at the end only exacerbates our pity and the tragedy in these final moments as we see Blanche fighting to save something that is already lost: her credibility and her freedom.

C) Now it's your turn. Write **two more paragraphs** in answer to our question (**Explore the significance of tragedy in this extract**). Look at your annotations and our example paragraph to help you.