

English Literature

PHASE THREE: Your own tragic explorations

Thanks for all the work on *Antigone* you submitted – watching a Greek tragedy will be incredibly valuable context for your study in September and I hope it wasn't too bleak. The third and final phase of your induction work asks you to keep the tragedy train rolling by exploring your own choice of text rather than us all studying the same Greek drama with not one but two Doctor Whos in it.

How to get the most from your induction work:

- Don't be afraid to put a digital hand up. Treat these activities as if you were in a classroom. If there's a word or idea that you don't understand, please e-mail Mrs Cummins (fxc@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk) to start a conversation.
- Take notes! There's lots of valuable material here and we expect our A Level students to have well-organised notes on various topics.
- This induction work has three tasks to prep for September.

What work is being set?

- There are two tasks being set, plus some organisational work to get you sorted. You'll be asked to read and make notes on a text that you believe deserves the label of a tragedy, ready for a presentation in September. We're also asking you to write a close analysis of an extract from a classic Victorian tragedy, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

How long should I spend on this work?

- It is expected that you spend five hours on this third phase of work, plus the reading of your chosen text.

Who should I send this work to and / or who should I contact with any questions?

- Mrs Cummins (fxc@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk)

How and when to submit

- Your work should be brought to your Literature lesson in September by the end of your first full week. We anticipate this being by Friday September 10th.

Task One: A presentation that's truly tragic

A presentation that's truly tragic. One of the best things about Literature is the time we get to spend talking about what we're reading and our views on it. We'd like you to prepare a short presentation on a book you've read that you believe fits under the heading of a 'tragedy'. Your presentation should explore what it is about that text that makes it deserve the label 'tragic'. If you can't immediately think of something miserable to read, here are some suggestions:

- Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy
- Heart of Darkness: Joseph Conrad
- Wuthering Heights: Emily Bronte
- The Great Gatsby: F.Scott Fitzgerald
- The Grapes of Wrath: John Steinbeck
- A View from the Bridge: Arthur Miller
- A Streetcar Named Desire: Tennessee Williams



Our course will begin with a short 'mini unit' exploring the genre of tragedy from its origins in Ancient Greece all the way through to our modern era, looking at how various writers have worked within the conventions of this genre to create works that have stood the test of time. At the end of this unit (likely towards the end of September), we'll be asking you to present on your work and why it deserves the label of 'tragedy'. You may wish to make notes on the text over the summer before forming your presentation in the first few weeks of the course so you can incorporate your knowledge from the start of Year 12.

Task two: Reflecting on the tragic genre

As part of a bridge between your work at GCSE and your work at A-Level, we'd like you to have a go looking at an extract from one of these classic tragic works, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. We'd like you to answer the following question: **"How does Hardy create a tragic atmosphere in this moment?"** We're asking for no more than two sides here – we're just interested to see how you deal with fiction at this point!

This extract is taken from Tess of the D'Urbervilles – because her Dad got drunk, Tess has had to embark on a late night journey to deliver beehives (obviously) with her younger brother, Abraham, and the family's horse, Prince. She falls asleep, and the extract begins with her waking up...

They were a long way further on than when she had lost consciousness, and the waggon had stopped. A hollow groan, unlike anything she had ever heard in her life, came from the front, followed by a shout of "Hoi there!"

The lantern hanging at her waggon had gone out, but another was shining in her face—much brighter than her own had been. Something terrible had happened. The harness was entangled with an object which blocked the way.

In consternation Tess jumped down, and discovered the dreadful truth. The groan had proceeded from her father's poor horse Prince. The morning mail-cart, with its two noiseless wheels, speeding along these lanes like an arrow, as it always did, had driven into her slow and unlighted equipage. The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life's blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road.

In her despair Tess sprang forward and put her hand upon the hole, with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops. Then she stood helplessly looking on. Prince also stood firm and motionless as long as he could; till he suddenly sank down in a heap.

By this time the mail-cart man had joined her, and began dragging and unharnessing the hot form of Prince. But he was already dead, and, seeing that nothing more could be done immediately, the mail-cart man returned to his own animal, which was uninjured.

"You was on the wrong side," he said. "I am bound to go on with the mail-bags, so that the best thing for you to do is bide here with your load. I'll send somebody to help you as soon as I can. It is getting daylight, and you have nothing to fear."

He mounted and sped on his way; while Tess stood and waited. The atmosphere turned pale, the birds shook themselves in the hedges, arose, and twittered; the lane showed all its white features, and Tess showed hers, still whiter. The huge pool of blood in front of her was already assuming the iridescence of coagulation; and when the sun rose a hundred prismatic hues were reflected from it. Prince lay alongside, still and stark; his eyes half open, the hole in his chest looking scarcely large enough to have let out all that had animated him.

"'Tis all my doing—all mine!" the girl cried, gazing at the spectacle. "No excuse for me—none. What will mother and father live on now? Aby, Aby!" She shook the child, who had slept soundly through the whole disaster. "We can't go on with our load—Prince is killed!"

When Abraham realized all, the furrows of fifty years were extemporized on his young face.

"Why, I danced and laughed only yesterday!" she went on to herself. "To think that I was such a fool!"

"'Tis because we be on a blighted star, and not a sound one, isn't it, Tess?" murmured Abraham through his tears.

In silence they waited through an interval which seemed endless. At length a sound, and an approaching object, proved to them that the driver of the mail-car had been as good as his word. A farmer's man from near Stourcastle came up, leading a strong cob. He was harnessed to the waggon of beehives in the place of Prince, and the load taken on towards Casterbridge.

The evening of the same day saw the empty waggon reach again the spot of the accident. Prince had lain there in the ditch since the morning; but the place of the blood-pool was still visible in the middle of the road, though scratched and scraped over by passing vehicles. All that was left of Prince was now hoisted into the waggon he had formerly hauled, and with his hoofs in the air, and his shoes shining in the setting sunlight, he retraced the eight or nine miles to Marlott.

Task Three: Be prepared.

Finally, we'd like to make sure you're prepared for the challenges ahead. Part of that is being properly organised. Please pick up a lever-arch file over the summer break ready for all those notes, handouts and handbooks coming your way!



We'll want to talk about your summer work in the first few lessons of the course – make sure it's completed by the start!

Best of luck! If there are any questions about the summer work or the course in general (or books you'd like to recommend), please e-mail Mrs Cummins (fxc@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk)