

Somersetting

***Guide for English Department
Freshers, 2022-23***



***Some wisdom left behind by departing
third years...***



HELLO & GOODBYE

Hello and welcome from the 'Somersetting' team! First of all, we want to congratulate you on making it to King's College London. You've all worked incredibly hard to get here and hopefully are excited for what's just around the corner. We must also offer another big well done for choosing to study English! Not to sound too biased too early on, but it is certainly the best subject and definitely the best department.

We've had a brilliant time at King's, and despite all that the past few years in particular have thrown at us, we will miss our time here and remember it incredibly fondly. And so, as the sun sets on our time by Somerset House, we thought it best to scribble down some of our hard-earned, soon-to-be-graduate wisdom in the hopes that it can offer you some insight, guidance, and comfort.

Good luck!



Inside this guide...

Transition to University

- Dealing with stage-fright, reading lists, participation, interviews, diversity and inclusion.

Academic

- Taking notes, London libraries, secondary material, starting essays, critical analysis, reviewing essays

Lifestyle

- Culture shock, time management tips, commuting, student reps, clubs and societies revision recipes, coffee shops, guide to campus, working and studying

Edited by Iman Hafeez

TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY



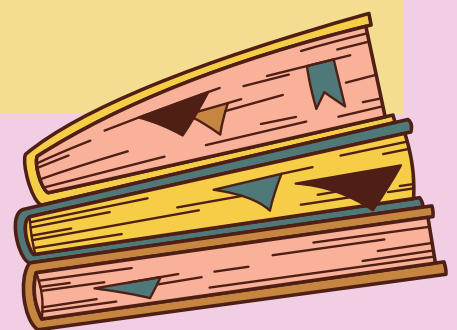
TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

How to get over stage fright & academic insecurity.

by Elinor Evans

Let me just start by assuring you that UCAS, or anyone else for that matter, didn't make a mistake: you are meant to be here. It is totally normal to feel a little apprehensive and concerned about your academic capability from time to time, and I can confidently say that we have all been there. In such a new environment, surrounded by so many new people, it's easy to think that everyone knows something you don't or that they've all read and understood *Ulysses*. They don't and they absolutely haven't.

The point of university is that you don't need to know everything, otherwise there would be no reason to attend. You're not expected to have read everything, and you don't get bonus credits if you can get all the University Challenge questions right – only bragging rights. However, you do probably know more than you think, and as I can confirm through experience, it's usually just nerves and stage fright keeping you from showing it.



LET ME JUST RUN THROUGH SOME QUICKFIRE REBUTTALS TO SOME OF THE CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE...

Obviously, complacency isn't great either, but you wouldn't be here at King's if you weren't capable of doing well. Don't overthink it – this is the time and place to ask 'silly' questions, make mistakes, hate old books or hate new ones, it's all part of the process! Remember that you're here to learn because you want to and for your own sake, not for anyone else's.

- 1. No one thinks your question is stupid**
- 2. No one is going to remember the mistake you made**
- 3. A 60 is a good mark (more the university marking system later)**
- 4. No one is watching you enter the lecture theatre, even if you're late**
- 5. It's not awkward or weird to be early**
- 6. You don't need a cool literary tote bag**
- 7. You don't look weird standing/eating/reading/waiting/walking silently on your own**
- 8. It doesn't matter that you haven't read Dickens, Joyce, Milton yet.**
- 9. It doesn't matter if you don't like Dickens, Joyce, or Milton (yet), just try to figure out why you dislike it**
- 10. You don't need all the different coloured highlighters**
- 11. You definitely don't need a MacBook Pro**
- 12. You're not being mean by defending or arguing your point**
- 13. You're not being mean by disagreeing with someone else's point, as long as you're not getting personal about it**
- 14. You're not being annoying by speaking a lot in class, stop apologising**
- 15. You are allowed to dislike a very famous or celebrated text without it being because 'you just don't get it'**

TIPS FOR TACKLING UNIVERSITY

by Jil Thielen

READING LISTS

Life as an English Literature student often looks a bit like this: you read, read and read some more. That said, it's completely normal to struggle with the increased workload at university. So don't be discouraged if you find the sheer amount of reading overwhelming – we've all been there. Here are some tips and tricks for keeping weekly seminar preparations fun and stress-free!

Try to incorporate reading into your daily routine! It's a lot easier to read a 300-page novel over the course of a week than trying to cram the night before a seminar. If possible, make a habit of reading for 30 minutes in the morning or an hour at night – whatever works best for you. I preferred to read fiction in the evenings and spend my days at the library contemplating the more theoretically heavy material. Once you break it down, the workload becomes a lot less daunting and much more doable. You'll be surprised by how quickly you can get through a book in this way.

Don't be afraid to prioritise! When I felt as if I couldn't keep up with the workload, my personal tutor told me to remember the quality-over-quantity rule: it is much more useful to read attentively than to skim over everything and not remember any of it. I've found that I'm best prepared for a seminar when I have something to say about a text – and it doesn't always have to be all of them. If you find you cannot possibly do it all, focus on one text and make notes: what stands out to you? Do you have any questions or interpretations of the text that start with interesting discussions and properly engage with your course mates – which is what seminars are all about!

Have dedicated library days! As an English student, you're expected to spend a lot of time studying outside of contact hours. So, if you enjoy working in the library, make a day of it! Arrange to meet up with a friend, pack some lunch and pretend you're at Hogwarts (for this, I recommend The Round Reading Room in the Maughan). Most libraries also have cafés ideal for coffee and snack breaks (remember to give yourself breaks). Alternatively, if the library isn't for you, London is packed with workspaces and cafés equipped with good WiFi to get a few hours of work in. In other words: get out and make studying fun – it doesn't just have to happen in your bedroom!

The Art Of Participation

what makes a good student?

by Elinor Evans

If you harbour an obsessive eagerness to please any and all authority figures, like I did when I first got to King's, then it might please you to hear that it is really not very difficult to be, at the very least, a good student. The one thing you will need to be able to do is something you've hopefully been doing all your life, and certainly will have the capability to do. Buckle your seatbelts kids, this one magical, revolutionary skill is ... speech. There is nothing more awkward than a silent seminar group – nothing. Even if you convince yourself that your silence is just a biding of time, an intellectual pause to facilitate the perfecting of your ideas, talking them out with your peers and tutors is almost always better. Plus, the rest of your group will only thank you, because the silence gets more painful the longer it lingers – trust me.

Obviously, speaking in class can be disproportionately frightening, and the only way I've found to mitigate this trepidation if you're someone prone to it, is to be prepared. Make sure you've read the key texts that you'll be asked to discuss and write down some thoughts or questions you had whilst reading, so you can regurgitate them easily at your 9am. You don't even need to have a fully formed thought to enter a discussion. Preface it with, 'I'm not sure where I'm going with this but...' and you'd be surprised how many people can bounce off of a half-thought. Listening to the other ideas shared in the seminar, and asking yourself if you agree or not, can also spur enough thoughts to bridge a silence between topics or elicit more discussion. Remember, you don't need to be coming up with something original; in fact, quoting the ideas from some secondary material and adding your own response is just as good.

Seriously, you needn't be formulating aphorism after aphorism to be a model student. Sharing your ideas with your seminar group and asking questions, even if they make you feel daft, is essentially the Socratic method anyway, and is definitely the point of seminars to begin with.

Interview with Head of First Year, Dr Carl Kears



*conducted by Cornelia
Sheppard Dawson*

1. What does your role as head of first year mean for students?

It means that there is another person to come and talk to, in addition to your personal tutor, lecturers or seminar leaders, about anything to do with being a first-year student. I have an office hour that is set aside for first years, which means that students can come by and have a chat. As head of year, I am also involved with the Skills and Support for your English Degree (SSED) programme, made up of sessions that run throughout the year, covering things like getting started at university, or beginning essays – I run a few of these and it's where I get to first meet a lot of students. Finally, being head of year also means that I work closely with first-year reps, taking in and responding to feedback from the year group at large. It's great!

2. What's something the students can look forward to in first year?

Wow. Well, as a new student of English at King's, you're going to learn so much over the next three years. There's a writer (or a host of writers), or a period of literature, or a poem, or a thinker, that you haven't met yet that will change the way you look at the world and alter the way you take it in or respond to it.

The first-year modules will open a rich, diverse, and dynamic landscape of literature for you, from experimental new poetry to non-canonical – or what the first-year English module on 'Writing Race, Writing Gender' calls 'para-canonical' – literature. You will even read some of the most fragmentary, ruined, and mysterious oldest English writings. Some of it will pass you by. You will wrestle with some material. You will dislike some of it. Some of the literature you will study won't speak to you. It's worth embracing all of this. You will find something you want to know more about. And, when you do, you have the space and the expertise all around you to pursue your interests.

Something you will begin to enjoy as a first year is the sense of collaboration that grows from thinking with people in the classroom: seminars are there for trying out in-progress ideas, for developing and sharing them. These are creative spaces, too, where we can craft new responses, question how and why we're examining our material, and do things together.

3. What's something that first years always worry about that they don't need to?

Some first-year worries only dissipate as time passes (e.g., I can say 'you don't have to read absolutely everything listed on a module every week' or 'it's fine if you couldn't finish the reading, or do it, it's there for you to come back to when you can' but it takes time to get used to having a whole degree before you, and it takes time to find out how you work best as a critical and creative thinker at university).

When I started university as an undergraduate (at King's, actually!), I moved to London from a very working-class environment in northeast England. I was the first person in my family to have even considered university education. At first, it was very overwhelming: my fellow students seemed to know so much about how things worked (all those new university online systems! All of that reading that didn't make any sense to me!), while my first tutors were asking me to think about literature in ways I'd never expected. But the more time that passed, and the more I discussed things with my lecturers and my peers, I realised that I could talk to people in my year group about how I didn't understand that theory, or particularly like that critic, and could carry that into my classes for discussion. There was time to explore, to find things out, to visit things and see things and ask questions and to develop my thinking. I was given the opportunity to carve a path, to pursue the writing and art that was most compelling to me.

4. What's one piece of advice you want to give the new first years?

If things feel as though they are getting on top of you, or even if it seems like university is moving in slow motion, or just not right at first, remember that time is on your side and there are a range of people to talk to in the Department. You are going to learn so much. So much will change, both slowly and quickly. Take your time. Visit some tutors in office hours. The first year is about getting a sense of things and exploring what's out there. You will find that word, or that passage, or that genre of literature that you didn't even imagine you would fall for, but it's going to happen over the course of three years (three years!). Don't rush. Take it in. Enjoy yourself!

That wasn't really one piece of advice, but there you go!

MARKING AT UNIVERSITY

"A 60 is a good mark"

The Marking System at University may look a little different than anything you've ever seen before. And that's okay! We're here to help :)

1st: 70-100%

2.1: 60-69%

2.2: 50-59%

3rd: 40-49%

Essentially, anything above a 40% means you passed. It's extremely difficult to get above a 70%, so if you have, give yourself a pat on the back.

But as a first year, the average you receive only accounts for 10% of your whole degree. The degree is designed like this to make sure you have time to adjust to everything, so don't stress too much about grades just yet!

Diversity and Inclusion in the English Department

by Sukhmani Bhakar

Whilst many of us are aware that starting a university degree involves intellectual investigation and close analysis, it is also important to remember that the university itself, as an institution that shapes the way we learn, is not exempt as a subject of this critical thinking. Studying English at King's involves expanding the boundaries of how we think and turning this reflection towards the mechanism of higher education itself. Ultimately this critical reflection aims to bring about positive change within the department to allow students and staff to feel represented and included.

Across my three years of studying literary and cultural theory at King's, I have come to understand inclusion as involving self-reflection within the English department. In my second year, for example, as Strand Campus representative for Decolonise KCL, the university's first student-led anti-colonial society, I organised and chaired a department-wide roundtable discussion on decolonising the curriculum. The strengths of the discussion included drawing attention to the historically exclusionary construction of higher education and devising practical solutions that can be implemented within the department to combat this systematic marginalisation. One of the practical successes of diversity in the English department at King's is the first year 'Writing London' module. Working in reverse chronological order, you will be immersed into the twenty first century multicultural London that many of us know and recognise today.

The Arts and Humanities faculty at large also features several student-led collectives, including the Students of Colour Network, the First Generation Network, and the opportunity to be an Inclusive Education Student Partner. I have recently attended one of the focus groups by the IESPs and greatly valued the opportunity to speak openly and extensively about my experience as a South Asian student at King's. Regular end of semester feedback sessions and surveys, for example, have also enabled me to articulate my interests in advocating for an increased postcolonial and global perspective within English department modules.

If what I am saying resonates with you, do not hesitate to join these groups. Even if you'd rather be there as a listener. Ask your head of years, module leaders, older students and check out the KCL events for when they're occurring.



As first-year students, I would advise you to keep in mind that arriving at a time-honoured institution such as King's does not mean you cannot critique the structures within which you learn and that your experience as students in higher education is ultimately yours to shape.

The English department commits to Diversity and Inclusion through their reps as well. If you're interested in making a change within the department yourself, either through organising events or being a point of reference for other students who may be struggling, being able to report their concerns further to the D&I staff representative.

written by Tanzim Kamali

edited by Cornelia Sheppard Dawson

It Gets Better

Maybe you already know what I am about to tell you from constantly looking at the English course page on the KCL website, but in my first year at King's I did not, and I wish I did.

In the first year, King's has compulsory core modules to give you a foundation for the rest of your degree. For some people, these compulsory modules can be engaging and illuminating. For me however, it made me rethink my course choice and all of my literary interests. Suddenly, I was thinking to myself, 'I shouldn't be here because I don't find any of this interesting', 'this isn't MY type of English' and 'these aren't the texts for ME' (I'm looking at you *Classical and Biblical Contexts*). Nonetheless, I persevered and attempted to engage with the readings (mainly because I was too scared to drop out). There were bits of first year I enjoyed, but overall I felt a bit like an imposter.

I'm glad I didn't however, because by the time you get to second year, you can pick your modules, but within the time period boundaries of Band 1 and Band 2 requirements (ask someone else to explain this, I still don't understand). Picking some of your own modules was a major development for me personally because I was able to study more of the topics and texts that interested me, even if some of them had to be from time periods that didn't immediately excite me. By the third year, King's allows you the freedom to study whatever modules you want to, and there are LOADS to pick from. In fact, I had so many modules on my shortlist for 3rd year that I opted out of doing a dissertation just because I couldn't pick between the modules.

For this reason, I enjoyed my degree more as the years went on because I had more freedom as I progressed. For others, the first year might have had all their favourite texts, but for me it was the later years where I really thrived. So here I am, telling you that even if you struggle at first, it will get better. You will study texts that make you love English and you will find new interests from the variety of modules that King's offers. Just carry on reading and expanding your interests. You can still be a great English student and dislike *The Faerie Queene*, it's okay.

Academic

edited by Tanzim Kamali

How to Take Notes

by Elinor Evans

It's kind of complicated in the sense that it should be the least complicated part of your time at university. If you're looking for the lo-fi study beats answer I'm afraid I will have to disappoint. I know there will be many of you to whom taking notes is a vital part of the learning process. If that is you, then just continue what you're doing! For many others however, taking notes during lectures will be something you vow to do thoroughly in the hallway before each lecture starts, then abandon fifteen minutes later when you zone out - this article is for you. Personally, three years of failed note taking at university, and two years at secondary school, has taught me that the best thing to do during lectures is to try and listen with as much focus as you can muster. Often, writing notes only divides your attention and honestly, you probably won't even look back at them again. You're better off only noting things you intend to investigate on your own time as a memory aid.

That being said, the time at which note taking is most effective is before your lectures and seminars, when you are reading (or skimming) the material. You should absolutely pencil things in the margins, utilise post-it notes, highlighters, or an iPad for the technologically inclined. That way, you can show up to your lecture or seminar with ideas and reference points already established, and the listening part comes a lot easier too.

Obviously, it's your call - perhaps a little trial and error is your forte, and if that's the case then by all means, note yourself out!

"listen with as much focus as you can muster"

The King's College London Libraries



Maughan:

Situated on Chancery Lane, a 10 minute walk from King's Building, Bush House and Virginia Woolf Building. Study desks hidden between bookcases and has the most resources for us English students!

Franklin Wilkens:

Situated within the Waterloo Campus. It has different zones - quiet, silent and discussion - which allow for different levels of concentration :) You may also book study rooms.

New Hunt's House

Situated within Guy's Campus. Long study tables overlooking the campus courtyard as well as Guy's hospital on the other side. Also has quiet, silent, discussion zones as well as bookable study rooms.



Weston Education Centre Library

Situated within Denmark Hill Campus. Also has quiet, silent, discussion zones as well as bookable study rooms.

Reviewing London Libraries for KCL Students

by Tanzim Kamali

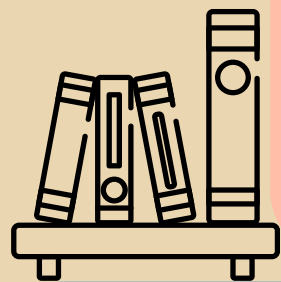
British Library

Closest station: King's Cross/ Euston

30 min walk from Strand Campus

Sign up beforehand for a Reader Pass

- + Loads of spaces in the Reading Rooms
- + They have a copy of every publication in the UK which you can request to read in the Reading Rooms at short notice
- + They always have cool exhibitions to discover on breaks from studying
- + It's the UK's national research library!
- Can't take much into the Reading Rooms, have to leave it in the cloakroom
- Finding a seat outside of the Reading Rooms is impossible



Senate House Library

Closest station: Russell Square/ Goodge Street

25 min walk from Strand Campus

Use your KCL card to sign up for free membership

- + An impressive collection of books that are available to borrow, handy for when you don't want to read a text in the BL
- + A good range of studying spaces but it takes some time to find them as most are hidden around bookshelves
- As it is a fairly old library, the building and its furniture is a bit on the musty side
- As the books are available to be borrowed, a lot of them aren't in great condition, especially the ones on the English reading lists

Every King's Student can apply for a University of London Library card, giving them access to all of the London University libraries.





Reviewing London Libraries for KCL Students

LSE Library

Closest station: Temple

5 min walk from Strand Campus

Currently only open to LSE students due to Covid, but otherwise you can use your KCL card to register for membership

- + Ridiculously close to Strand Campus
- + Modern and clean feel
- + Different types of study spaces, silent spaces, group spaces, low noise spaces
- Not the best collection of books for English students but when you find a book you need it is usually in great condition and easily obtainable due to the low demand on literature

You can also study at the 7th floor of the South-East Wing of Bush House (located on Strand).

As well as the Science Gallery attached to Guy's Campus if you want a less formal yet King's related study space.

Wellcome Collection

Closest station: Euston

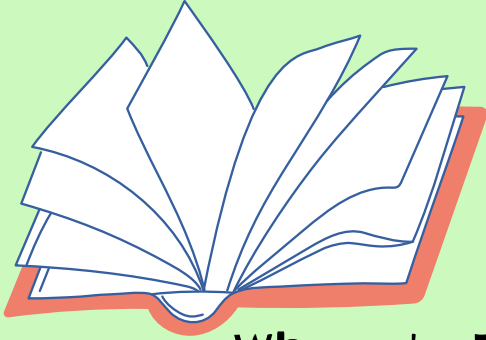
32 min walk from Strand Campus

Book a free ticket before you visit

- + Quiet, spaced out seating (even before Covid)
- + The coolest science exhibitions to look at when you get bored
- They close at 5pm most days (close at 7pm on Thursdays) and they are closed Sundays too
- Like BL, you can't take much in with you to the library, you have to put your bags/coats/food/drink away in the lockers provided before heading into the library

OPEN

LIBRARY



Where to Look – A Basic Breakdown of the Best Places to Search for Secondary Material

by Sara Hussain

- **KEATS, Reading Lists and Further Recommended Reading.** This is the best place to start looking because this is what your module convenor thinks is most relevant and helpful to understanding the texts and topics at hand. They will, at least, give you a solid understanding of what the major arguments and criticisms are surrounding the subject and what your convenor deems important to know before you branch out into researching further criticism. The convenor spent time uploading these documents and links for a reason so don't ignore them!
- **JSTOR.** JSTOR is an online library that holds millions of journals, chapters, books and sources for you to read and use in your essays. You have access through your KCL login and you can download almost any of the works you want. Simply enter a few keywords in the search bar to get going.
- **Archive.org.** This website is a lifesaver! It is so helpful for finding old, elusive texts (but also well-known texts you just can't get your hands on at the time!). I have found everything on there, from old theory texts to Charles Dickens to Aravind Adiga to Jacqueline Wilson (don't ask), and it's also great for reading texts before deciding whether they are worth buying your own copy. It can be difficult to annotate as it is online but it is easy to find specific pages as you just search for keywords. Just remember to cite the website.

WWW.ABEBOOKS.CO.UK



Great place for second hand books ^

Where to Look – A Basic Breakdown of the Best Places to Search for Secondary Material

- **Google Books.** Google Books is a helpful tool for seeing if a book might be useful to you. You usually have to pay if you want to access the entire book, but you can normally view a few pages for free, generally the introduction, so you can read it and see if the content might be worth pursuing. Also, if you search for the book along with some keywords in the Google search bar (or just the keywords like 'gender roles in British colonial India'), the specific pages of the book relating to your topic may come up and so you may be able to access those pages for free. Again, it's really important to remember to cite the text that you've found.
- **Proquest Ebook Central.** You can usually access academic books on here. They are helpfully broken down into chapters and, again, you can search by keywords through the pages. It is usually a bit more difficult to find what you're looking for but your KCL login will give you access, and it is very clearly laid out once you find your book.



ProQuest
Ebook Central™



JSTOR



Google
Books

How to Look

Ask your Module Leaders!

Module Conveners put together reading lists, they know which articles to put onto this list because they know the subject inside-out. Ask them about other articles within the same field/subject area to begin your research!

Key Words

Writing an essay on the Biblical references in Jane Eyre? Look up the specific passage in Jstor/google books search bar.

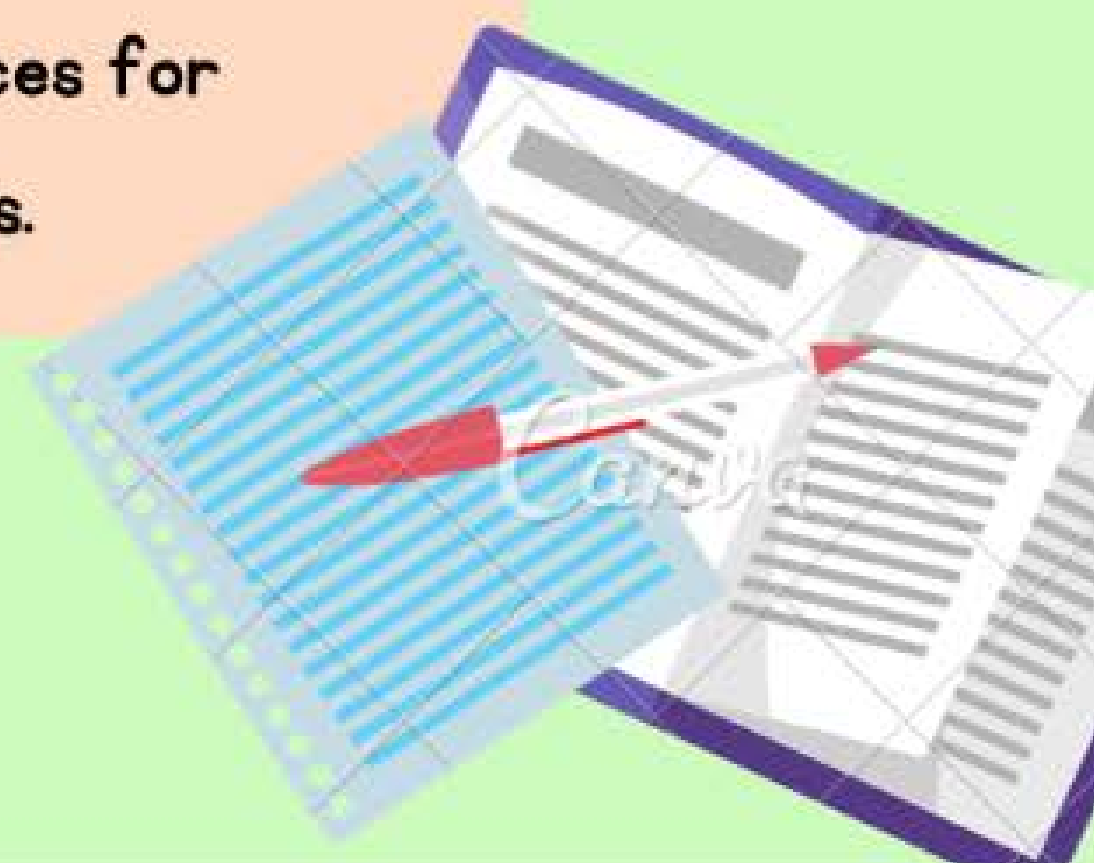
Using the resources on Keats

Believe it or not, module leaders actually think through the reading lists they put on keats. Try skim reading the extra articles you could use for your essays.

Using Bibliographies of useful articles

Sometimes the answers lie in the questions. A lot of the time, essay questions set by module leaders correspond with specific weeks.

Have a look at the secondary readings and scroll down to their bibliographies. They could be useful sources for your own essays.



Essays: A Guide to Getting Started

by Sara Hussain

This article is essentially a breakdown on how I planned all of my third-year essays (the year I finally understood how to actually write a good essay!) along with a few other tips and tricks. Of course, this is not the one and only way you can go about planning and starting your essays, so feel free to explore and try out other methods to see what works for you. This is merely a structure that after much trial and error, I personally found helpful and hopefully it's of some use to you too.

- 1. Know what you're answering.** ANSWER THE QUESTION! So obvious but so crucial – if your essay doesn't address the question at hand then your essay won't be successful. This means choosing one specific question from the selection you're given and sticking with it. Don't attempt to answer multiple questions or themes you were interested in as you simply won't be able to comprehensively cover all of them and your essay will appear confused and lacking direction. Choose one and delve deep into how you want to respond.
- 2. What is your overarching argument?** I like this to be the first decision I make when starting to plan my response as it ensures that I have a focused direction from the beginning, meaning I'm aware that all research and every point I make within the essay should lead back to this argument, preventing me from wandering too far. I like to keep it simple and use the language of the question, ensuring I am responding to it directly. **Example: Discuss addiction and dependency in relation to one or more of the primary texts.** *Amitav Ghosh demonstrates that all forms of addiction and dependency ultimately result in oppression, powerlessness and humiliation. Furthermore, through proving this, he suggests that once past the point of addiction and dependency one can regain a sense of agency.*

Essays: A Guide to Getting Started

Try to have an idea of what this might be before term ends so you can discuss this with your seminar leader as their guidance can be invaluable. (Even if, realistically, you don't start writing the essay until a few days before it's due, settling on an argument in advance will be incredibly helpful.)

3. **Textual examples.** Now it's time to really pick out some key examples from the texts and consider why and how they serve as evidence for your point. You don't necessarily have to do all the analysis at this point as this will come in time, just have these examples ready for when you need them, and it will give you an idea of how you might structure the essay. Remember to constantly keep your overarching argument in mind, so regardless of how interesting the example may be, unless it strengthens your argument it shouldn't be included. If you're struggling to find examples that do this, you may have to reconsider your argument altogether. I like to organise my examples together under the sections or paragraph headings I will divide my essay into and allocate different colours to the quote and the separate analysis.

4. **Secondary material.** Ideally, you will have read some secondary material prior to assessment season but it's okay if you've only just done the bare minimum at this point - we've all been there! You can still produce an excellent, carefully researched essay! You should start by considering what material might be relevant to your argument. Reading the introduction should help give you a good idea on whether the material will be useful to you. What have other critics said about this topic and how can you use their criticism to enhance and develop your argument? Start simply, like whether they agree or disagree with your argument, and develop from there. While engagement with secondary material is one of the things that will really lift your essay into the higher bands, it is vital you understand that you shouldn't include secondary material merely for the sake of it.

For more information, I highly recommend you read the more in depth article I've done on engaging with secondary criticism on pp. 22 - 24.

Researching and Using Secondary Criticism in Essays – How to Engage with it Properly!

by Sara Hussain

This article will, hopefully, give you a base understanding on how to approach secondary criticism, so you don't need to stress and figure it out for yourself when essay season arrives!

What evidence or quotes can you find that support your argument?

Is it historical context that supports your opinion on how the work would have been perceived or criticised?

If so, can you pinpoint exactly what the context is that supports your argument? This means not accepting generalised historical remarks nor writing generalised historical remarks, such as *'During the 1930s, it was expected that a wife was to do as her husband wished, regardless of her own preferences, therefore Mr de Winter was likely to have disliked Rebecca's rebellious personality and resented her for not being his ideal wife.'* While there's nothing wrong with the point here, it's supported by a generalised comment on the 1930s without any specific citation, or quote taken directly from a 1930s source, or quote from a trusted historian. For example, you could have taken a quote from a 1930s article on tips on how to be a good wife. Here's an example of a well-supported contextual point:

During the 1830s, opium production in India was a major source of income for the East India Company, to the point that 'just prior to the Opium Wars, over fifteen thousand 140lb. chests of Bengal opium were sent to the China market' (footnote). The expansion of the trade was never-ending, particularly as the British were dependent upon it 'in offsetting the cost of Chinese tea imports which were soaring in the late eighteenth century' (footnote) as demands for the drink continually grew in Britain. This demand for the drug, along with the profits that came with it, resulted in an increased pressure on those who grew and produced it on a local scale such as the inhabitants of Ghazipur, whose lives were dominated and consumed by the constant push for opium production, as shown in Sea of Poppies.

Researching and Using Secondary Criticism in Essays – How to Engage with it Properly!

As you can see, there are direct quotations taken from a trusted critic and the relevant evidence builds in a linear fashion to support the overall point. Just be careful to not confuse historical fiction, such as Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, with actual historical work when talking about them.

Is it a critic in agreement with your argument?

If so, what exactly are they in agreement with? Are they agreeing with your one point or your entire argument? Consider how you can frame this within your essay depending on which this is. For example, if it is your entire argument then perhaps you can open your essay with the criticism, as a starting point for your own argument.

It is imperative to understand that if a critic's work is in agreement with your argument, you cannot merely say this but must take this further to extend and strengthen argument. For example, you can't just write, '*This idea is supported by Geraldine Forbes, who highlights female economic dependency in her article ...*' You must explain how this is directly relevant to your argument, reinforcing your themes and any particular points within the quote that draw out specific ideas you like.



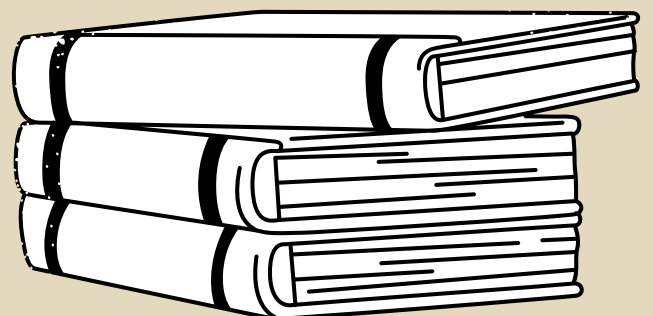
Researching and Using Secondary Criticism in Essays – How to Engage with it Properly!

Should you use evidence or quotes that disagree with your argument? If so, how can you use them?

Yes, you can and should include criticism that also goes against your argument! It shows you are well-read and will strengthen your argument if you can use their points to your advantage. This doesn't mean you should just state that they disagree and leave it at that but explain why their point is weak, what they might not have considered, evidence they've missed or a different perspective. Or you could acknowledge the majority of their argument but still pick out points of theirs that support your own point, such as *'While I disagree with this evaluation as I believe Van Hopper is an interference rather than an outright enemy like Rebecca for the narrator, I like Linkin's use of the word 'hyper' as it connects Van Hopper to the idea of excess and takes note of her overbearing nature.'*

Ultimately, secondary criticism should not be included for the sake of it nor just inserted in the essay and left as that. It should support, strengthen, challenge and develop your argument to take it further.

If you want more information on exactly where you can find secondary criticism, please see my other article, 'A Basic Breakdown of the Best Places to Search for Secondary Material', on pp. 18 - 19.



What is the Marker Looking For?

by Fiona Eddis-Finbow

***"believe in
yourself and
your
argument!"***

Get rid of useless
connecting words.

Forget your A-Level
English teacher repeating
the same 'additionally,
however, thus, moreover' -
these are fillers. you don't
actually need them

Writing essays can seem like an extremely daunting task, but once you get the hang of it it's no big deal. Here is what to keep in mind as you write your essays:

- **Write to Express not to Impress** – It's common to fall into the trap of thinking writing with a flourish will get you the mark, but if you're using fancy words with the intention of impressing your marker, the meaning of your essay may become muddled. Ultimately, what's most important to consider when essay writing is that you are creating an argument and everything you write should express it as clearly and concisely as possible.
- **Be Confident** – As we move up to higher education it's easy to doubt our own abilities and lose confidence in our voice. Avoid using too many qualifiers in your essays, such as 'perhaps,' 'maybe,' 'can be interpreted.' By using qualifiers, you detract from the confidence of your voice and your argument, leaving the reader unconvinced. One way to help feel more confident in your writing is to draft your essays. Starting is always the hardest part but as soon as you start you become surer of what you're writing, and the confidence shines through to your finished product. Believe in yourself and your argument!

What is the Marker Looking For?

- **Always Signpost** – Signposting is one of the most important things you can do to ensure that the ideas in your essays flow. Signposting is essentially outlining what a given paragraph will discuss, making it easier for you and the reader to follow the argument thread of the essay. Through consistently signposting, your essay will immediately gain a more confident voice and more clearly express the intended argument.
- **Refer to the Mark Scheme and the Academics** – If you feel lost trying to understand the expectations of your writing, refer to the mark scheme! Luckily, the mark scheme can easily be accessed through KEATS and it provides an overview of the expectations for English essays at every band. Moreover, the academics are here to help! Make sure to pop in on your lecturers/seminar leaders during their office hours if you want to discuss the mark scheme, your essay ideas, or any questions you have.

Happy Writing!

***"signposting
is one of the
most
important
things you
can do"***

Modules

written by Pavlina Sotirova
edited by Sukhmani Bhakar

Here is some information about a few modules that you may take in your first year. It can be daunting not knowing what you're going to study, so this should help give an idea of what it will be like.

Classical and Biblical Contexts

When I took 'Classical and Biblical Contexts' in 2018, we studied a variety of literature, including Roman myths, *Jane Eyre* and *Hamlet*. Whilst you may have encountered these texts before, the thorough examination of the various classical and biblical allusions on this module unlocks a new level and depth of meaning. You'll also delve deep into classical texts, which are perfect for chatting about with your friends who study Classics or to name-drop in conversations to show off your literary knowledge.

Most importantly, this module develops your understanding of various key texts and imagery that are consistently alluded to throughout English literature. By exploring how allusions function, you will hone your critical thinking skills and your ability to combine contextual knowledge with literary analysis to produce a sophisticated argument. Skills aside, it is also incredibly enriching and enjoyable to explore these texts, especially if you already love myths and legends!

One of the texts you will study is James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which is a text that leaves you with a lot of questions. Whilst considered challenging and fascinating (the two often go hand in hand), Joyce's novel is well-suited for analysis. As literary critics, our focus is on the questions that emerge from texts and how we can unpack their nuance and complexity. So, don't worry if you find specific texts challenging, it's completely normal! Just keep reading, ask questions, and book an office hour with your lecturer or seminar leader if you need to chat with someone about a text or an idea. The knowledge and skills you obtain from this module are essential to your development as a literary critic, so do your best and enjoy the journey through 'Classical and Biblical Contexts'!

To give you more insight into 'Classical and Biblical Contexts' and the exciting changes the module has recently undergone, I had a chat with Dr Hannah Crawforth, the module convenor.

Which skills does this module develop the most?

This module develops your close-reading skills while also encouraging you to think across time periods, looking at the relationships between texts. We explore the ways in which texts of the past are remade in the present. We also think about connections between texts of the past and the politics of both their moment and our own, extending your understanding of the contexts in which literary texts are written. Finally, we introduce some new theoretical models for thinking about the way in which texts relate to one another, seeking to replace traditional ideas of imitation, influence and allusion with more diverse and equitable, less hierarchical ways of thinking.

How can a student make the most of this module?

Come prepared to read a wide range of texts and with an open mind about what you will read. Not everything we read will be a text you identify or agree with, but they have all been chosen to facilitate important conversations about literary and political issues. There are some forum tasks for the module on KEATS, many of which ask for creative or imaginative responses; come willing to engage and be open and bond with your fellow students.

Any reading recommendations which aren't studied on the module but resonate with its themes?

There are many, many texts that reimagine earlier works and traditions, taking myths, stories, language from the past and remaking it for their present moment. Read anything that speaks to you in this way. You might also want to get started with some of the longer texts on the course – Sophocles' *Antigone*, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*.

What is your favourite text/theme/part of the module?

My own personal favourite texts are some of the contemporary poems we read by Jericho Brown and Saeed Jones, both of which reimagine classical mythology in the context of current conversations about race, violence and politics, brilliantly interweaving all of this with considerations of their own place in literary history.

Finally, a special message from Dr Hannah Crawforth to you all:

While the module is currently called 'Classical and Biblical Context' we in fact consider a broader range of texts and traditions from the past, encompassing scriptural traditions, myths, and stories from a range of cultural backgrounds. I have been working to 'decolonize' the module and we are firmly committed to an anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom. We are also seeking to make the course as inclusive as possible in terms of gender, sexuality and other issues, including disability. Authors now studied include: Lucille Clifton, Kamila Shamsie, Danez Smith, Langston Hughes, Olaudah Equiano, Toni Morrison, Safiya Sinclair and Aimé Césaire. I hope you'll enjoy the module as much as I enjoy teaching it.

Early Modern Literary Culture

Some of you may be familiar with the term 'Early Modern', but don't worry if you're not since encounters are key to this exciting and varied module which will introduce you to the world of Early Modern literature! You will revisit familiar works like *Romeo and Juliet* and extensive works which literary critics have wrestled with for centuries, such as *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*. If you're interested in performance and court politics, Ben Jonson's Court Masques are absolutely something to look forward to!

Although *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* may seem a little daunting at first, they are both thematically rich texts filled with allusions, magic and betrayal, making them the ideal texts for us, as readers and critics, to unpick. 'Early Modern Literary Culture' is the type of module where your personal encounter with and exploration of the texts are key. Your lecturers and seminar leaders will provide you with plenty of contextual knowledge, additional readings, and critical concepts you can explore that will enhance your experience of the text. For example, *The Faerie Queene* is the only book in my entire three years of study that I have experienced in so many different formats: different editions, modern translations and audiobooks have all been a part of my exploration of the world of *The Faerie Queene*.

'Early Modern Literary Culture' highlights the importance of combining how you individually experience the texts, what fascinates and puzzles you, with what literary critics and historians have already written about them. This module was certainly a turning point in my studies – it made me think, engage and write more critically whilst also unravelling a whole world of Early Modern literature before me. If you love 'Early Modern Literary Culture' as much as I did, I recommend the following second-year modules: 'A Mad World, My Masters: Performing Culture in Jacobean England' and 'History, Politics & The Elizabethan Imagination'.

To give you more insight into 'Early Modern Literary Culture', I had a chat with Dr Sarah Lewis, the module convenor.

Which skills does this module develop the most?

This module challenges students to engage with texts which are unfamiliar, and which, as a result, may seem 'difficult'. That unfamiliarity takes many forms: you'll be reading texts by writers you've never heard of; examining genres of writing it's unlikely you'll have come across before; and exploring early modern ideas and ideologies which, although in many ways familiar, can also be strikingly and sometimes disturbingly different from our own. Learning how to profit from that unfamiliarity through your own thinking and writing is the key skill you will develop through this module.

How can a student make the most of this module?

I think the most important thing students can do is read the texts! If you can consistently read the materials, and show up to class week on week, you'll do well!

Do you have any reading recommendations which aren't studied on the module but resonate with its themes?

Perhaps rather predictably, I would recommend Mantel's Wolf Hall trilogy. We don't look at any texts from the period in which the novels are set, but they are still useful for evoking the cultural contexts we will be exploring. They are an obvious choice, perhaps, but I think both the form and content of Mantel's writing (can we separate the two?!) evokes brilliantly the smooth veneer of social decorum and the frantic scrambling for power (in its many forms) which are an ever present undercurrent. Like early modern writers, we'll be thinking about this tension between the form of expression - performance / spectacle / decorum - and the underlying and incredibly fraught political negotiations of social status, gender, sexuality, race, nationality etc., which often bubble up through the cracks.

What is your favourite text/theme/part of the module?

I really enjoy introducing students to the Court Masque, which is a particularly niche literary / performative genre.

And finally a special message from Dr Sarah Lewis to you all:

I'm really looking forward to welcoming you all to the module in January! Do get in touch if you have any questions, or if you just fancy a chat about the literary culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries!

Medieval Literary Culture

Whether you love Medieval literature or you find it slightly puzzling, this module provides you with a great introduction to the genre and builds your confidence in working with Middle English.

Before 'Medieval Literary Culture', the only Medieval literature I had studied was Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and my view of the Middle Ages was primarily influenced by films and TV shows. Through this module, however, I expanded my understanding of the relationship between the Middle Ages and its depiction in popular fiction and media today. The texts you will study are filled with exciting and familiar stories of magic and adventure, as well as some which you may be less familiar with such as martyrs, medieval comedy and travel writing. Whether you're acquainted with Medieval literature or not, you're certainly going to learn plenty and have fun!

My favourite text on this module was *Beowulf* because it has so much that I enjoy reading about, like heroes, monsters and profound questions about what it means to be a monster. The history surrounding the text, its adaptation and reinterpretation in the 20th and 21st centuries was particularly engaging and learning about them made it easier to understand nuances within the text. The wide variety of texts studied in this module and the in-depth analysis certainly strengthened my confidence in working with Medieval literature.

The most important tip I can give, in fact for all modules, is to not be afraid to ask questions and to book office hours with your lecturers and seminar leaders. Hearing about my seminar leader's dissertation on Medieval literature made me realise how much there is to study about the importance of how we practically engage with it today, which developed both my critical thinking and made me even more excited to explore Medieval literature. If, like me, you love the Medieval drama and performance on this module, I highly recommend that you also check out the second-year module 'Performance in Medieval Culture'.

To give you more insight into 'Medieval Literary Culture', I had a chat with Dr Joshua Davies, the module convenor.

Which skills does this module develop the most?

This module is all about close reading, but doing close reading in a way that recognises the importance of historical context. This might sound a bit confusing, but this module is also about texts that belong to multiple contexts. That means that we think about the moments in which texts were first composed and circulated, but also the moments at which texts were read, whether that is in the Middle Ages or modernity. One of the things we learn is that the meanings of a text change according to the context in which it is read, and also that texts never belong to only one context. It all makes sense after a few weeks, I promise!

How can a student make the most of this module?

:Read! One other really important piece of advice: keep an open mind! One of the topics we discuss in the module is popular contemporary perceptions of the medieval period. If you say 'medieval' to someone, what kind of image comes to mind? Dragons? Kings, queens and castles? Peasants? Monks? We all approach medieval culture with preconceived ideas that have been shaped by things we have read, watched or played in the past (Tolkien perhaps, or Game of Thrones, or Skyrim). Part of the work we do on this module is about thinking through those preconceived ideas, so it is very important that students try and keep an open mind as they read. There is another question we need to ask as well: why is our contemporary popular culture full of references to the medieval period? What's that about?

Any reading recommendations which aren't studied on the module but resonate with its themes?

A text I've read recently that resonates in really interesting and surprising ways with our themes is Hazel Carby's *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands*. This is an absolutely brilliant and very moving book, and one of the things it is about is the way in which ideas about the past shape our lives in the present. A text with more explicit connections to the work we do on this module is Miller Wolf Oberman's poetry collection *The Unstill Ones*, which includes translations from Old English poems (don't worry if you don't know what "Old English" is exactly: we will teach you!). Another is Paul Strohm's *The Poet's Tale*, which is a very fun and readable biography of Geoffrey Chaucer that gives really valuable insight into what medieval London might have been like.

What is your favourite text/theme/part of the module?

My favourite part of the module is the seminars. I love talking to the students about these strange, wonderful and sometimes slightly annoying (in a good way!) texts. I love the surprising connections students are able to make and the way their ideas develop over the course of the module.

German Stage 1

Did you know that you can do a Modern Language module as part of your English degree? No extra fees or hassle, you only need to select it when choosing your other modules, and you're one step closer to speaking another language. There's no better time to learn a language than your first year at university!

Enrolling on 'German Stage 1' (Beginner) during my first year opened a range of unique experiences to me, such as visiting the Waterloo campus weekly, meeting students from other years (including MA students!) and, of course, learning German. At the end of the module, I had the equivalent of A1 CEFR German, which is one of the many reasons I recommend doing a language in your first year as it adds variety to your degree and looks fantastic on your CV!

All you need for German Stage 1 is:

- The textbook: Berliner Platz 1 NEU Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch 1 mit 2 Audio-CDs zum Arbeitsbuchteil. (available on Amazon UK and AbeBooks)
- Relevant materials from various other sources will be provided by the teacher.

You'll also need motivation and resilience – learning a new language from scratch can be challenging but incredibly enriching and fun.

Remember – if you're not a beginner, you'll need to do a test so that you can be enrolled in the appropriate class for your skill level. As always, this is a fantastic opportunity to hone your linguistic skills!

What you should know:

Any language module for a BA English undergraduate is worth 15 credits but takes two semesters to complete, which is different from your usual English department modules. As a result, you will be doing four English department modules and your German module instead of only four English department modules during one of your semesters.

Check out the document linked below for a complete description of the German Stage 1 course, including a breakdown of all the topics you will cover and information about assessments. To view all languages currently on offer, check out the Modern Language Centre's page [here](#) and feel free to contact them.

To give you more insight into what studying German as part of your degree is like, I had a chat with Verena Day, a German teacher at KCL.

What skills does taking a German language module at university develop the most?

I think it develops your critical skills. One aspect that so often goes unmentioned is the forced reflection of your own language. You suddenly have to think how something works in your own language – be that English, Bulgarian or Mandarin. I think it also improves your critical skills and attention to detail.

How can a student make the most of this module?

By doing homework. If you don't do anything between lessons, you won't improve, and it won't be as fun for you. But it doesn't even have to be written work. Simply going over a conjugation in your head whilst you're brushing your teeth or are on the way to the bus will improve your language skills! Everyone underestimates 'silent practice' – but it is very effective!

Are there any additional books or resources you recommend to students who are considering doing this module?

I wouldn't recommend any particular books, but I know that some of my students love the YouTube channel 'easy German'. And I'd recommend reading German newspapers – getting familiar with word order and vocabulary is always helpful.

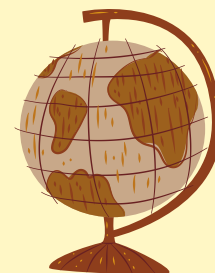
What is your favourite part of the module?

In all honesty: it's reading the exams. I'm often blown away by how much some people develop their language skills. And when I see they've really taken on board what I have taught: that's super rewarding.

Lifestyle

edited by Eranda Salihu





Dealing With Culture Shock

by Ana Bottle

If you're from a different country, or simply just not from London, coming to study in the capital can result in a bit of culture shock. Maybe where you come from is quiet and peaceful, and everyone knows each other. Whereas in London, everything is fast-paced and if you don't hurry up, you may gain several cross looks from Londoners passing you by. This can be quite the adjustment, but once you do adjust (and you will) you will find the pace exciting.

It means there's always something to do, and most of the time, something new to do. A new restaurant to try, a new bar, a new museum exhibit (most of which are free!), a concert, a play... There's just so much to do! If you're like me, this is what attracted you to King's in the first place. Apart from its excellent academic standing, it boasts on being a mere 10 minute walk to Covent Garden, 15-minute walk from Soho and another 15-minutes from the South Bank. You could catch a musical after your last seminar of the day or grab brunch at one of the trendy spots in Covent Garden after your 9am lecture. The options are endless.



**"there's always
something to
do"**

"you don't have to do it alone"

But at the end of the glamour day, can wear off and homesickness can creep in. At times like these, it's important to remember that just because you're in a new and shiny city doesn't mean that you shouldn't take time to yourself, even if that means staying in occasionally. I know that when you first arrive you want to devour the city and make as many friends as you can at university, and that's great, but you also need to let yourself miss home, your family, your pets, your friends from home. You'll be going through really big changes, whether you realise it or not, but you don't have to do it alone. Just because you're alone in a new city doesn't mean you can't share this with people from your old city/town. In fact, I'm sure they'll be excited to hear about everything you get up to. So, schedule in time for a video call here and there, and if one day you're sad because you can't find good tacos in the city, let the sadness be. Tomorrow you can try and find some at Camden Market. Another great way to avoid homesickness is to join societies such as French soc, African and Caribbean soc, Arabic soc, Filipino soc, etc... to meet others from your home nation!



A few Housekeeping bits....

Things to know when moving to London



Tesco Clubcards!

You don't want to be missing out on the clubcard deals you could potentially get discounts on or win points that could help you buy groceries at the end of the month :)

STUDENT OYSTER CARDS



if you're worried about spending money in London, getting a student oyster could be useful. You can apply for one on the TfL website, and you just need to pay £20 to get lower prices overall.

STUDY ADVICE

Starting university means adjusting to a new level of academic writing and research. Here are some tips to help you figure out your study style.

Lectures

It can be easy to fall into the trap of writing every and any thing down in a lecture - the key is to take in the content the first time so that you can go back after and make any basic notes. You can try listening to a lecture on a journey as well so giving your brain time to take in the information.



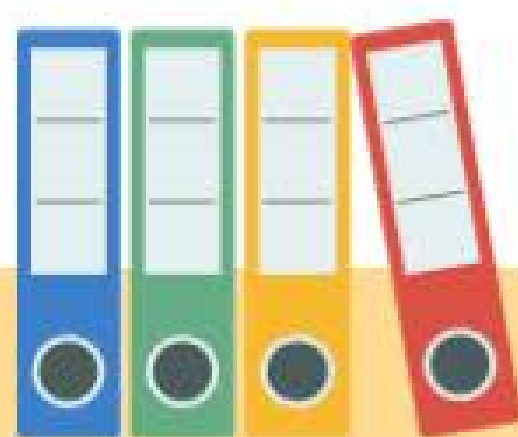
Study Groups

Try setting up a study group or even a coffee study date with other members of your seminar group. It can help to discuss and share ideas on content.



Research

Jstor will be your best friend when it comes to finding secondary sources to use with your work. The best essays tend to not only comment on secondary sources but also use your own critical voice to challenge them.



Organisation

Firstly, don't put too much pressure on yourself to stay on top of everything - the first year is your opportunity to settle and take your time adjusting.

Tidying up the folders on your laptop/desktop and keeping all notes you might need neatly arranged by date or topic (whatever works for you) will mean you have easy access to your work and can make you want to study more.

Staff


The biggest thing to always remember that your seminar leaders and lecturers are always available to answer any questions you might have or even any ideas you might want to discuss. It can make a world of a difference having a small 10 min chat with a staff member to help clarify any obstacles you are facing or any ideas you want to pursue.



12

TIME MANAGEMENT Tips

by Cornelia Sheppard Dawson

1. Work a week ahead. If you have seminars and lectures at the beginning of the week, you need to have started that reading the week before. If you are always doing week 8 reading in week 7, it will help a lot.
 2. Don't worry if you don't finish it all, no one does. Just try and do a bit of everything.
 3. If you know there are some big novels coming up, try and obtain them to start reading during the holidays, future you will be thankful!
 4. Make a list of your reading each week for each module - KEATS will help you with all of this, as will the model outline
 5. Read anywhere and everywhere - commutes are great moments to get some reading in.
 6. Similarly, look ahead at what reading is coming up, and whether you have any busy weeks, and maybe try and cross some things off preventatively. Sometimes this might feel counterintuitive when you have other things due sooner, but it works out in the end.
 7. With coursework, try and start as early as possible. Even if that is just a bullet pointed list, mindmap or an idea of which secondary materials you want to use.
 8. Each term has a different timetable, which means it always takes a bit of time to figure out a rhythm of getting work done, so don't worry if in the first weeks you get behind.
- 

9. You will also have some weeks where you just don't get as much done, and that's fine as well, just try your best!

10. If you need to finish a long novel by a particular day, work out how many pages you need to read each day, and try to always read slightly over that to give yourself contingency time. You can also read part of it and the summary so that you may still contribute in the seminar, having a good idea of the whole plot and the author's writing style.

11. You may not have many set hours of teaching, but you should still try and treat a weekday as a work/school day.

12. if your modules has reader responses, mark in your diary which weeks you want to do them to stop you from forgetting and having to rush them at the last minute.



Top 5 Tips for Commuters from a Commuter

by Sukhmani Bhakar

So, you're starting university, and you're conscious that your peers are bonding with flatmates or are busy decorating their rooms in halls whilst your housemates are a little more familiar. While it can be difficult dealing with feelings of being left out if you are commuting, it's important to remember that there is no universal student experience. Whether you have chosen to stay at home because you want to or cannot relocate for personal reasons, this doesn't mean that your time at university should be any less memorable. Having lived at home throughout my degree, here are the top five tips I have collated on commuting to university.

Saying Yes

Tempting though it may be, try to avoid retreating after a long day and instead say 'yes' to going for a coffee or a walk after lectures to explore your surroundings. This way, you avoid falling into a routine of going from home to university and back again without actually embracing your time there.

On-Campus Events

Attending events hosted by societies or your department are an important opportunity to help foster a sense of community. KCLSU also holds events specifically aimed at commuters which are great for networking with people living near you or travelling in the same direction.

Make the First Move

Take initiative and organise plans yourself. For example, if you have friends that don't know each other bring them together over lunch and you might just have created a new friendship group. It is important to shape the kind of relationships and university experience you want.

Studying Abroad

@kclstudyabroad

If you are able, studying abroad can be a great chance to practise living independently whilst surrounding yourself with a new culture and way of learning within the framework of your degree.

Embrace the Commute

The time you spend travelling to and from King's can be used either to prepare for the day ahead or switch off, instituting a work-life balance.

Boring though it may sound, one of the things I will certainly miss most about my time at King's is my journey into campus. When I wasn't running late and scrambling up the teeming stairs of Bush House, travelling to the Strand was my time to embrace the sights and sounds of central London, which I was lucky enough to call both home and university.

by Elinor Evans **Intro to the English Dept Student Reps**

A Student Representative is pretty much what it says on the tin – it's the opportunity to speak on behalf of, and for, your peers at departmental meetings. Being a rep isn't too intense, nor is it particularly taxing, but the things you discuss, the topics you get to weigh in on, can be quite deep. Raising critiques of your department, making suggestions about teaching methods, and giving honest feedback about module experiences are but the tip of the sensitive iceberg. Hugely important but more tricky conversations about mental health, diversity, and inclusion need your face behind them too. These are all things the departmental staff want to hear from a voice that is closer to the lived experiences of university life than their own. These topics demand to be discussed – and they require delicacy and precision – which of course is not always easy. You must want to understand, want to help, and crucially, want to really stand for something.

There is, of course, a much lighter side to being a rep too. You'll get the chance to suggest and even organise departmental wide events, gatherings, parties, or (like last year) a competitive game of University Challenge. It's a great opportunity to develop your advocacy, diplomacy, and public speaking skills, not to mention allowing you to participate actively in shaping the English Department and community at King's.

The department will email when applications to be student reps open – so keep an eye out!

Don't forget to
check out our
Instagram to make
sure you don't miss
any big
departmental news!



Clubs and Societies

by Emma Campbell

Clubs and societies are a key part of the social landscape at university, and are fantastic spaces to meet new people, explore new interests, or develop existing ones. Becoming a member of a group can help make the transition to university life much easier – but equally, the sheer amount of different clubs presented to you, all vying for membership, can be quite overwhelming at first. As someone who has been involved in societies from my first year, here are three tips to get you started.

1. Check out the listings on KCLSU

The KCLSU website's list of student activity groups is a one-stop shop for all things clubs and societies. Each group has its own profile page, complete with links to socials and websites, membership fees, committee details and other information for getting involved. Be sure to read over this information because each organisation will operate slightly differently. You might also notice the gold, silver or bronze medal at the top of each profile. This is a relatively new scheme KCLSU have introduced to reward societies based on a set of goals, including membership size, inter-society collaboration, participation in KCLSU forums, and so on. It has nothing to do with student experiences of the group, but it might be indicative of how active they are.

2. Try things out

Welcome Week is undoubtedly the busiest period of a society's calendar, with events running pretty much back-to-back all week - and hopefully at least some of these will be in-person come September. It's a great time not only to check out the societies themselves, but also to meet fellow freshers with similar interests. Most groups will have introductory events, taster sessions or meet-and-greets - don't be afraid to attend these before deciding which groups to commit your time and money to. This is also a fantastic opportunity to sample an interest that is completely new to you, even if you choose not to continue with it. And, of course, there'll be lots of freebies!

3. Get involved!

My top piece of advice for incoming freshers: although it might seem intimidating at first, particularly in the bigger societies, don't be afraid to really throw yourself into it. Send a committee member a message, ask about opportunities to get more involved or pitch your own ideas. I was treasurer for the Strand Magazine in my second year and we absolutely encouraged this - in fact, it was a key part of our operation. Anyone could pitch an article or project idea to the relevant editor or committee member, and these were almost always accepted. If you're interested in becoming part of a society's leadership in the future, this is a great way to make yourself known.

They don't joke when they say there's a society for practically everything at King's, but to get you started I'll list some that might interest you particularly as English students:

Student Media

The Strand Magazine: KCL's arts and culture publication, with printed editions around four times a year.

Roar News: KCL's student newspaper/tabloid also published regularly in print.

KCL Journal: platform for creative writers and artists published online and biannually in print.

The Edit: fashion editorial publication.

Performance Societies

The King's Players: theatre company performing at least four times a year.

King's Shakespeare Company: theatre company for Shakespeare enthusiasts, performing two major productions per term.

King's Musical Theatre Society (KMT): what it says on the tin!

Other Literary Societies

KCL English Literary Society: society for literature enthusiasts no matter your degree subject.

KCL Book Club: group to discuss all things literary, including a monthly book chosen by the society.

King's Poetry Society: society for budding poets with casual socials in addition to writing groups, workshops and open mics.

15 Minute Revision Recipes

by Ana Bottle

Chicken Fajitas with Mexican Rice

Fajitas

1 tbsp of unflavoured oil
1 onion, diced
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
500g of chicken, cubed (quorn can be substituted to make this vegetarian)
1 red onion, sliced
1 red bell pepper, sliced
1 yellow bell pepper, sliced
1 orange bell pepper, sliced
1 tbsp hot chilli powder
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp garlic granules
1 tsp oregano

1. Add your 1 tbsp of oil to a large pan and let it warm up over medium heat. Add your white onion and sauté for 3-5 minutes. Once softened, add garlic and cook for a further minute.
2. Add your chicken and cook all the way through.
3. Next, add your peppers and red onion and let those cook for 8-10 minutes, until softened.
4. Finally, add your spices, season and mix well.

Mexican Rice

1 tbsp unflavoured oil
1 cup long-grain rice
2 tomatoes, halved
2 cloves of garlic, peeled
½ onion
1 handful coriander
1 vegetable stock cube
1 chicken stock cube
2 cups water

1. Pour the unflavoured oil into a large pot and turn it on medium-high heat. Tip in your rice and fry for 2-3 minutes.
2. Blend your tomatoes, garlic, onion, coriander, stock cubes and water in a blender. Once smooth, pour into your pot.
3. Mix the sauce in and bring to a boil. Cover the pot and reduce the heat to medium. Let it cook for 15 minutes.
4. Next, let the rice sit off the heat for 10 more minutes. DO NOT OPEN THE POT.
5. Finally, remove the lid, fluff up your rice with a fork, and serve!

Chicken Noodle Stir-Fry

28g salted peanuts
2 tbsp unflavoured oil
2 tbsp teriyaki sauce
500g chicken (can be substituted for tofu to make vegetarian)
1 large carrot, julienned
200g tender-stem broccoli
175g baby corn, cut in half
2 packs medium fresh egg noodles
1 tbsp soy sauce

1. Put a large pan on the hob on medium heat. Toss your peanuts in 1 tbsp of unflavoured oil and let them roast.

2. Cut your chicken into cubes and tip into a bowl. Pour in the remaining oil and 1 tbsp of your teriyaki sauce. Coat the chicken well and then tip it into your pan and cook through.

3. Meanwhile, place chopped vegetables into boiling water and soften for 7-10 minutes. Drain once cooked.

4. Once your chicken is cooked through (no longer pink inside), add in the vegetables and your noodles, making sure to spread them out.

5. Add in 1 tbsp of teriyaki sauce and 1 tbsp of soy sauce, mix well. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



Central London Coffee Shops

by Ted J. Gibbs

Looking for a comfortable study space, somewhere to hang out and socialise, or a way to fight off the harrowing consequences of 4 hours sleep? (We get it, you're a big ol' grown-up now and you set your own bedtime – but what were you even doing all night?) Have no fear: London is full of hundreds of great coffee shops to suit whatever purpose you're after.

Press Coffee – 3 Fleet Street

During my first year as an undergrad, I'm pretty sure I spent half of my student loan at Press. And while I am not encouraging you to do that, it was worth the money. It's about a five-minute walk from the Strand Campus and was the first speciality coffee shop I fell in love with in London. The coffee is consistently very good, and there's also a nice seating area downstairs where me and my friends did a lot of work/procrastinating between seminars. They have a pretty wide selection of loose leaf teas too!

Lundenwic – 45 Aldwych

Lundenwic is another coffee shop right by the Strand Campus – this time sitting directly opposite the northern face of Bush House. While the inside is very cosy (which is a polite word for cramped) and is packed 99% of the time, the coffee there is great. I would especially recommend if you have a lecture or seminar in Bush House and are desperate for a caffeine kick beforehand (so what if you miss the first five minutes? Treat yourself – you deserve it).

Attendant – 27A Foley Street

Now, you may be thinking – “Huh, ‘attendant’? Like a restroom attendant? Like someone whose job it is to sit outside the toilets and make the whole bathroom-going situation uncomfortable?” To answer your many questions – yes. Attendant is a coffee shop in Fitzrovia that occupies the space of a restored Victorian public toilet. If it sounds weird, I can confirm that it... kind of is. But it’s also very cool, and the coffee is very good. They also do really nice food there – and to be honest, being surrounded by urinals whilst eating lunch grows on you after a while. Or not. Either way, you should definitely check it out.

Honourable Mentions:

- The Hoxton – 199-206 High Holborn: A lovely place to get some work done.
- Monmouth Coffee – 27 Monmouth Street (duh): Very high-quality coffee. Bit pretentious.
- Tate Modern / Britain: A bit of a wildcard, but the Tate gallery cafés make for comfortable and productive workspaces if you’re looking for a change.



Study Spots

HERE'S SOME STUDY SPOTS NEAR THE STRAND CAMPUS



WatchHouse Somerset

Somerset House East Wing, London WC2R 1LA

A coffee house that is right next to the strand building? With a cute interior and a great selection of food, this is a tempting study spot,.



Maughan Library

Chancery Ln, London WC2A 1LR

King's Maughan Library is a great quiet place study with a big library to access on a range of specialist subjects. Check out the reading room for all the study vibes you need.



Waterstones - Trafalgar Square

The Grand Building, Trafalgar Sq, London WC2N 5EJ

A cute cafe in a bookshop right at the centre of the city.

Campus Guide

by Emma Campbell

Our five campus setup at King's gives the College a student experience unique not only to London, but to the whole country. And while you might not even venture out into some of the smaller ones during your time here (I don't know anyone who's been to St Thomas's!), it's worth familiarising yourself with the facilities at each one. If the pandemic has prevented you from visiting, I hope this guide will give you a better idea of what to expect in your first days on campus.

Strand

Nearest Tube: Temple (Circle/District), Holborn (Central/Piccadilly), or Charing Cross (Bakerloo/Northern)

As an English student, this is undoubtedly where you'll be spending most of your time. The Department itself is based in the sixth and seventh floors of the Virginia Woolf Building on Kingsway (be sure to wave to the statue of the woman herself as you walk in), where you'll find the Department office, the common room and a whole corridor of seminar rooms and academics' offices. The VWB doesn't have any lecture halls, however – for those you'll be either be in the original Strand campus itself (behind the brutalism it's actually quite pretty!), or in Bush House across the road. Each has its own cafeteria, numerous food outlets and study spaces.

Bush House is separated into several wings, and the South East Wing is home to KCLSU at Strand. The Vault, one of our student bars known best for Red Card Wednesdays, is in the basement, and The Shack, our coffee shop, is just above on the ground floor. The NHS centre is upstairs, and the seventh floor contains a large study space next to the Student Media office. The eighth floor is also known as The Meadow. It's kitted out with fake grass and massive bean bags – a popular napping spot come exam season!

Whilst located a little further east, the Maughan Library – King's biggest library – is also part of Strand campus. Like the older parts of campus it's a bit of a maze at first, but the building is gorgeous – particularly the round reading room, if you can get a seat!



Waterloo

Nearest Tube: Waterloo (Bakerloo/Jubilee/Northern/Waterloo & City)

Waterloo campus is a quick trip across Waterloo Bridge from Strand. It has its own cafeteria and gym and is also home to the Franklin-Wilkins Library. It's unlikely you'll have any classes there, but if you live in the Stamford Street Apartments - literally across the road - it's a convenient study space.

St Thomas's and Denmark Hill

Nearest Tube: For St. Thomas's, Lambeth North (Bakerloo), Westminster (Circle/District/Jubilee) and Waterloo (Bakerloo/Jubilee/Northern/Waterloo & City).

For Denmark Hill, Denmark Hill Overground and Thameslink

These are the two you probably won't visit regularly, if at all. St Thomas's is part of St Thomas's Hospital across the river from the Houses of Parliament, and is home to parts of the medical and dental schools. Denmark Hill is the only campus not in central London - located instead in Camberwell - and it holds yet more parts of the medical and dental schools as well as the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience.

Guy's

Nearest Tube: London Bridge (Northern/Jubilee) or Borough (Northern)

Guy's is the main campus for medics, but is frequented by students from all departments because it is home to Guy's Bar, the oldest student bar at King's famous for its legendary Wednesday sports night. It is located just under The Shed, another coffee shop. You might also head to Guy's for society or club meetings in one of the many KCLSU spaces there.

The Science Gallery, run in partnership with King's, is well worth checking out - as is Borough Market if you're looking for some good food, which is only a short walk away.

Tips for Working Alongside your Studies

by Jil Thielen

A part-time job provides you with the kind of work experience and skill set that will most likely help you land a job after graduation. Plus, it certainly makes living in London more affordable! Here are some things to consider while job hunting:

Since university work will take up a lot of your time, it's best to look for a part-time role or a job that is based on a zero-hour contract, meaning you can choose when and how much you'd like to work. In my final year, I worked as a part-time barista in a small café close to my flat. My zero-hour contract allowed me to work my job around my uni schedule, taking on more shifts when I had the time and less during exam season and particularly busy weeks. It's helpful to match your working hours to your study routine: you can do frequent short shifts to break up the day, or a couple of longer ones to reserve other days for the library.

You can get jobs through the student union. They're often more lenient with student timetables and pay pretty well!

**"Make
sure to not
take on
too much"**

If a job in a café or restaurant sounds like too much of a commitment, it's worth looking into event agencies like Off to Work or Host Staffing. You don't need any hospitality experience to join the community and it's super easy to sign up: just fill in an online form and attend your interview. Once you're registered with the agency, you'll be able to work at some of London's most exclusive events like music festivals and sporting events – think Ascot and Wimbledon! According to my flatmate – who works for Host – the pay is usually really good (£8-£12 per hour), and you'll meet lots of amazing people on the job!

If money isn't at the forefront of your mind, consider joining the committee of one of King's many student societies and activity groups. Unpaid work is still work – and a great way to gain relevant experience. As General Officer of KCL Dance Society, I developed strong administrative skills whilst liaising with external companies. Being part of a committee will improve your organisational skills and your ability to take initiative whilst working efficiently as part of a team. Aside from the great variety of transferable skills you'll develop, this kind of job can also function as a form of office experience, which is often a requirement for entry-level jobs.

Lastly, don't spend every waking hour either working or studying. While a part-time job can be great, uni life can also be stressful and it's important to make time for yourself. So, while you figure out what works best for you, make sure not to take on too much!

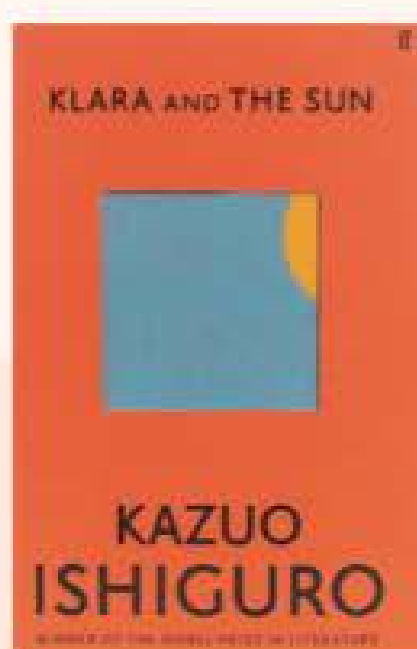
Extras

by Elinor Evans and Sukhmani Bhakar

**Some final bits and pieces to
leave you with.**

Book recommendations

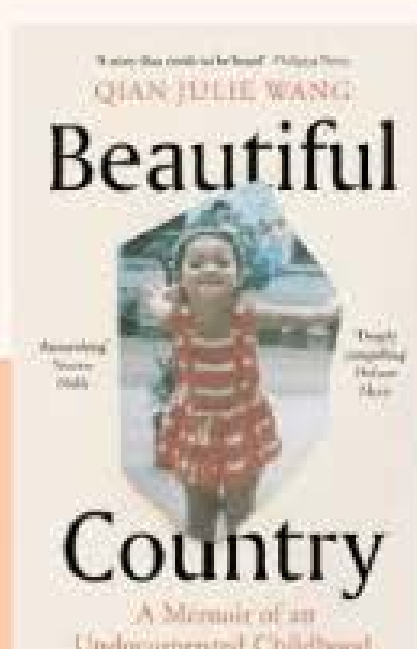
DOING ENGLISH LIT CAN SOMETIMES MEAN YOU MISS OUT ON. PERSONAL READING. HERE'S SOME GREAT BOOKS FOR YOUR OWN TIME



Klara and The Sun

KAZUO ISHIGURO

Ishiguro's writing manages to creep up on you in the best way possible, as he explores the meaning of love and friendship as well as what it means to be human in this novel.

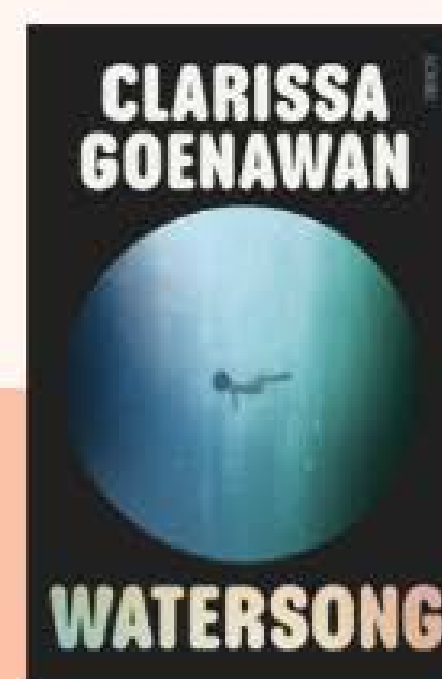


Beautiful

Country

A Memoir of an Undocumented Childhood

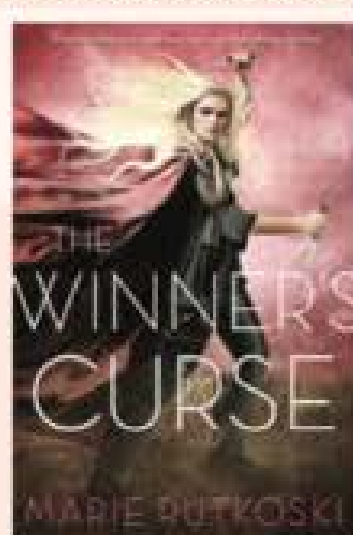
Beautiful Country - Qian Julie Wang
This is a beautifully written memoir about one woman's experience growing up undocumented. A memoir that will teach you to be grateful.



CLARISSA GOENAWAN

WATERSONG

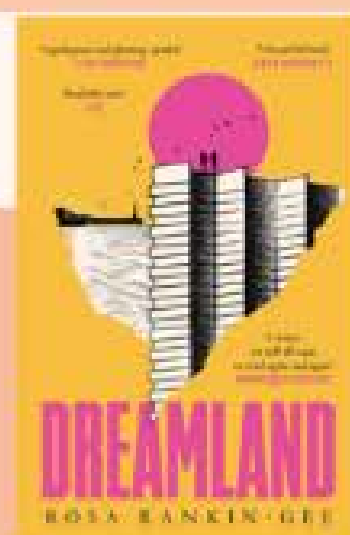
This mystery will have you going through all the emotions as you discover the story of Shouji Arai who is tangled in a web of secrets after he crosses his powerful employers



THE WINNER'S CURSE

MARIE RUTKOSKI

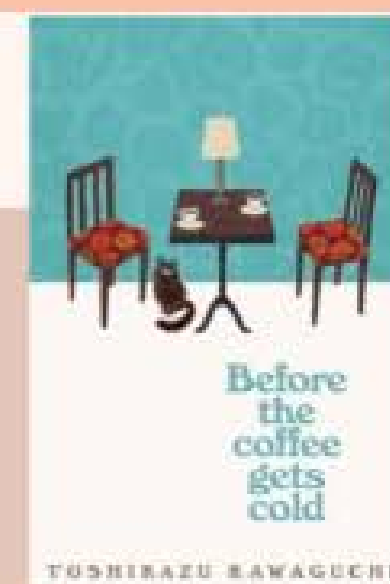
The first of a trilogy this YA Fantasy keeps you busy and excited with its amazing descriptive writing and engaging plot.



DREAMLAND

ROSA BANKS-O'BEIRNE

A new novel that addresses an eerily familiar possible future focussing on the climate crisis and social policies that are currently in place now. With characters you'll get attached to and a story that you can't put down, it's a must read.



Before the coffee gets cold

TOSHIYUKI SAWAGUCHI

This novel written by a Japanese author features short stories that all intertwine together creating a light read exploring the question of what could happen should we return to the past as well as different types of relationships.



2022

AUTUMN

All Too Well (10 Minute's Version) (Taylor's Version)	10:13
Circles - Post Malone	3:35
October - Alessia Cara	4:01
Staring at the Sun - Post Malone ft Sza	2:48

~~~~~  
**UPBEAT**

|                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| More than a Woman -<br>Bee Gees | 3:16 |
| Be Honest - Jorja<br>Smith      | 3:27 |
| Phases -<br>PRETTYMUCH          | 3:36 |

**COMMUTE**

|                                       |      |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Do not disturb -<br>Mahalia           | 3:51 |
| Highest in the Room -<br>Travis Scott | 2:56 |
| Walking - 88rising                    | 2:47 |

**EXCITING**

|                                     |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Start of Something New -<br>HSM     | 3:17 |
| The Way Life Goes -<br>Lil Uzi Vert | 3:42 |
| Kiss Me More - Doja<br>Cat          | 3:28 |
| ~~~~~                               |      |
| Hey Ya - Outkast                    | 3:55 |
| Long Way 2 Go -<br>Cassie           | 3:40 |
| Affection - Fiji Blue               | \$10 |
|                                     | 2:54 |

# FRESHER'S MIXTAPE



"She's Leaving Home" - The Beatles

"London Calling" - The Clash

"School's Out" - Alice Cooper

"At Last" - Etta James

"Skip to the Good Bit" - Rizzle Kicks

"The Climb" - Miley Cyrus

"Should I Laugh or Cry" - ABBA

"Young and Menace" - Fall Out Boy

"Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" - The Smiths

"With a Little Help From My Friends" - The Beatles

"One More Cup of Coffee" - Bob Dylan

"London Boy" - Taylor Swift

"Waterloo Sunset" - The Kinks

"Parklife" - Blur

"Late" - Kanye West

"Go Your Own Way" - Fleetwood Mac

"Feel Good Inc" - Gorillaz



# Useful Links

by Sukhmani Bhakar



From time to time, it is inevitable that the English group chat will be bombarded with frantic requests from your peers for various links to the department website and coursework cover sheets among other documents. And so, in an effort to save you from superfluous panic and confusion when you would otherwise rather be concentrating on the work in hand, we have compiled an extensive list of important links that we hope will be helpful to you as you start your English degree.

Disclaimer: All links were correct at the time of writing

## Departmental:

English Department Webpage -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/dept-english>

Student Handbook -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/english/index>

Module Listings - <https://keats.kcl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=75618>

Contacts and Staff Office Hours -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/english/key/who>

Term Dates -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/english/key/termdates>

## Exams:

Guidance for Exams -

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/acservices/examinations/examininfoforcandidates>

Exam Scripts -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/handbooks/academicassess/assessment/examscriptaccess>



## Support:

Supporting You -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/english/supportvoice/index>

Disability Inclusion and Accessibility -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/english/supportvoice/support/Faculty-Disability-Inclusion-and-Accessibility-Statement>

Student Representation -

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/students/english/supportvoice/voice/representatives>

KCLSU Advice - <https://www.kclsu.org/help/advice/>

KCLSU Support Services & Self-Care -

<https://www.kclsu.org/help/advice/othersupport/>



*"You cannot find peace by avoiding life."*

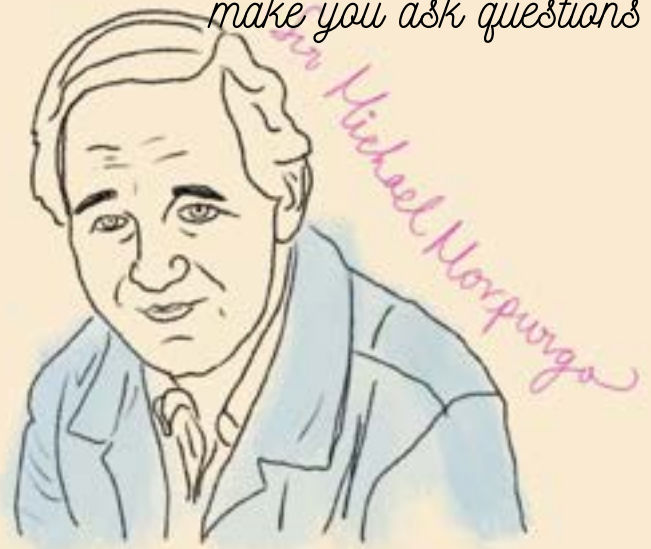
# THE TALKING HEADS

*of kcl alumni*

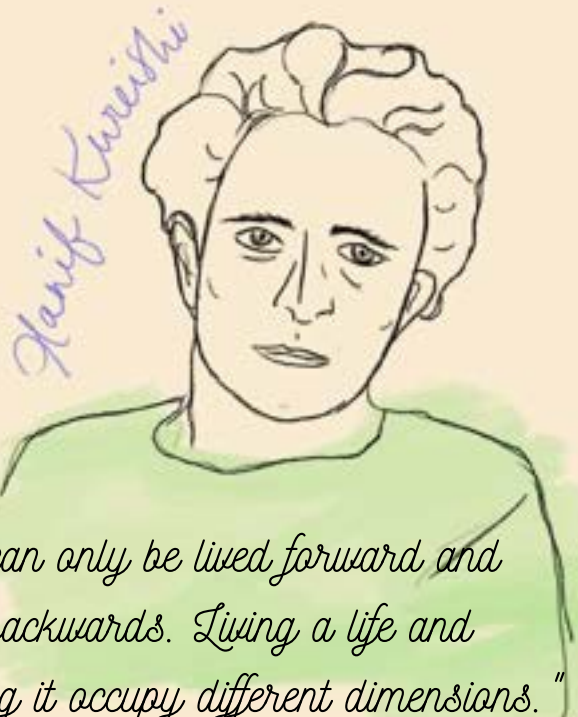


*"stories make you think and dream; books  
make you ask questions"*

*"the poetry of the earth is never  
dead"*



*"some folk want their luck buttered"*



*"Our lives can only be lived forward and  
understood backwards. Living a life and  
understanding it occupy different dimensions."*

# Thanks for Everything!

Sadly, this is the end of the magazine, and also the end of our time here at King's. We hope you enjoyed reading this and found it useful!

We just want to say some quick thank you's to everybody worked on this magazine.

Firstly, all the editors:

**Sukhmani Bhakar**  
**Iman Hafeez**  
**Tanzim Kamali**  
**Eranda Salihu**

Everyone who wrote a piece:

**Ana Bottle**  
**Emma Campbell**  
**Fiona Eddis-Finbow**  
**Ted J. Gibbs**  
**Pavlina Sotirova**  
**Jil Thielen**

The management team:

**Elinor Evans**  
**Sara Hussain**  
**Cornelia Sheppard Dawson**

All of the staff that contributed:

**Dr. Hannah Crawforth**  
**Dr. Joshua Davies**  
**Verena Day**  
**Dr. Carl Kears**  
**Dr. Sarah Lewis**

And a special thank you to Dr. Daniel Starza Smith for making this possible

As departing students we also want to say a massive thank you to all the people that made our time at King's what it was. We want to thank the Professional Services staff in the English Department Office without whom nothing would be possible, all the lecturers and seminar leaders who have inspired us during our time here, and all our fellow students who made our experience extra special. Good luck to all the new students and we hope you enjoy your time at King's as much as we did!