English in ACTION

Midlands

DEC
1
2026

English in Action

For A-level English Literature students

This inspirational and popular study day is coming to the Midlands this autumn, to take place in the beautiful Elgar Concert Hall at the University of Birmingham. This event will provide fascinating insights, comprehensive support and new perspectives for all A-level English Literature students, with a particular focus on Shakespeare's *Othello* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.* The day will explore a close analysis of these works, including their broader context as well as a fascinating look at how Shakespeare's plays were brought to the stage. The programme includes clear links to support Assessment Objectives 1-5 for all exam boards and there will be an additional exam session, together with an unmissable presentation from a leading poet.

This inspiring and interactive event promises to give students the vital information, expert insights and new-found confidence to propel them to maximum examination success this year. Book now to secure your places!

- Poetry reading with Owen Sheers
- From page to performance: staging Shakespeare's Othello
- 'Rich girls don't marry poor boys': Marriage, Money and the American Dream in The Great Gatsby
- The antihero's journey: the structure of The Great Gatsby
- Themes and perspectives in Shakespeare's Othello

University of Birmingham,
Birmingham,
B15 2TT

Venue: £24.50 +VAT *

Plus one COMPLIMENTARY staff ticket per 10 students.

*VAT may be reclaimable. Please check with your finance department

Education in Action is the leading provider of inspirational, informative, Education in Action study days for A-level, IB, BTEC and GCSE students.

Award-winning, world-class speakers
Cutting-edge content
Thought-provoking demos and presentations
Examination hints, tips and guidance
Modestly priced to offer access to all

Complimentary staff ticket for every 10 students booked

Bookings can be amended up to 28 days before the event day

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Poetry reading with Owen Sheers /
Owen Sheers – Poet, Author and Playwright

Owen Sheers introduces Skirrid Hill as a whole and reads some of the poems from this collection, as well as from his work more broadly. He will take audience questions.

Owen Sheers is a poet, author and scriptwriter, whose many awards include Somerset Maugham for Skirrid Hill and Blue Book, and Welsh Book of the Year for The Dust Diaries and Pink Mist. He is Professor of Creative Writing the University of Swansea.

The antihero's journey: the structure of The Great Gatsby /
Luke McBratney – Author and former Principal Examiner

In this talk, Luke McBratney reveals the hidden architecture beneath Fitzgerald's glittering surface. Although The Great Gatsby is modernist, fragmentary and experimental, it is also a tightly structured novel built around two potential heroes. One is a dazzling antihero who gives the novel its myth; the other is a participant narrator whose changing perspective creates its classic arc of development. The talk's main textual readings explore Chapter 5 as the novel's pivotal midpoint and consider the structural importance of Nick's narration.

Luke McBratney is an examiner, author and editor. A former Principal Examiner and specification writer for a major examining board, he is a member of the English Review editorial board and co-series editor of the Hodder Study and Revise guides to set texts for A-level English Literature. He is co-author of a textbook for A-level English Literature (OUP) and author of guides to love poetry, including Skirrid Hill and New Selected Poems.

From page to performance: staging Shakespeare's Othello /
Nick Hutchison – Theatre director, actor and educator

Nick Hutchison looks at how the play would have been staged in Shakespeare's time, considering the effects of rehearsal constraints, cue scripts, and a visible audience; he will consider the text as a blueprint for performance, and how all these factors affect productions today.

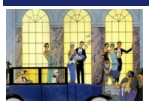
Nick Hutchison is a theatre director, actor and educator who has directed Shakespeare's plays across the globe. He lectures for Shakespeare's Globe, LAMDA, RADA and universities worldwide on Elizabethan and Jacobean Theatre, specialising in original Shakespearean staging practice and theatre performance derived from close textual analysis. As an actor he has worked in film, TV, theatre and radio, including for the Royal Shakespeare Company and in films including About A Boy, Miss Potter, 102 Dalmatians, Fierce Creatures and Restoration.

Themes and perspectives in Shakespeare's Othello /
Emma Smith – University of Oxford

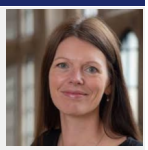
Emma Smith explores aspects of love, hate, and tragedy in Shakespeare's Othello, using up-to-date critical perspectives alongside close reading of specific passages. There will be an opportunity for questions.

Professor Emma Smith is Lecturer in English at the University of Oxford, Professor of Shakespeare Studies and Fellow of Hertford College. Her research focuses on Shakespeare and early modern drama. She has worked with theatre companies including at the Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre and Donmar Warehouse, contributed to numerous radio programmes and served as a consultant for TV and film.

'Rich girls don't marry poor boys': Marriage, Money and the American Dream in The Great Gatsby /
Deborah Longworth – University of Birmingham



The Great Gatsby is an anatomy of a class system in which marriage and money are inseparable, with Tom and Daisy's union representing its cold, functioning core. This talk examines two doomed attempts to cross that class divide – Gatsby's romanticised pursuit of old money and Myrtle's rawer, more disposable version of the same transaction – asking why we idealise one and dismiss the other, and whether Fitzgerald makes us complicit in that distinction. The novel demonstrates that the American Dream was never designed to succeed for those like Gatsby or Myrtle, and that the class system works exactly as designed, for the careless people who can afford to smash things up and survive.



Deborah Longworth is Professor of English Literature and Pro-Vice Chancellor at the University of Birmingham where she teaches nineteenth and twentieth-century literature. Her research focuses on literature from 1880-1940, with a specific focus on gender and modernism and the modernist novel.

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