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**COURSE TITLE:** British Literature

**COURSE TEXTS (in chronological order):**

- **SHAKESPEARE**

- **DEFOE**

- **SWIFT**

- **AUSTEN**

- **SHELLEY**

- **DICKENS**

- **BRONTE**

- **WILDE**

- **LEWIS**

- **ORWELL**

- **MLA**

**DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS:**

*Summa Cum Laude* students may take the British Literature course for the (K) designation as an elective in addition to the courses required to complete their graduation requirements. *Magna Cum Laude* and *Standard* diploma candidates may choose to pursue the (K) designation, but are not required to do so. If not pursuing the designation, the parent has the option of altering the course plan as desired.

**KOLBE CORE (K) COURSES:**

- Students pursuing the Kolbe Core (K) designation should read eight novels, four per semester. **Kolbe Core students need to complete at least 4 of the weekly papers**; they should have discussions or write informal essays in response to the rest of the weekly paper topics as these cover major themes and will appear in some way on the final exam.

- For students who are not seeking the Kolbe Core (K) designation for this course, parents may alter the course as they wish.

**REQUIRED SAMPLE WORK:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation*</th>
<th>British Literature</th>
<th>K British Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>1. Any Two (2) written samples of work</td>
<td>1. The complete exam for 3 novels and/or plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>1. Any Two (2) written samples of work</td>
<td>1. The complete exam for 3 novels and/or plays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Designation refers to designation type on transcript. K designates a Kolbe Academy Core course.*
The Kolbe academic advisor will verify that the required work was completed successfully and award the Kolbe Core (K) designation. The Kolbe academic advisor has the final decision in awarding the designation for the course. If no designation on the transcript is desired, parents may alter the lesson plan in any way they choose and any written sample work is acceptable to receive credit for the course. If you have any questions regarding what is required for the (K) designation or diploma type status, please contact the academic advisory department at 707-255-6499 ext. 5 or by email at advisors@kolbe.org.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**
Kolbe Academy’s British Literature course introduces students to works that have enlarged our aesthetic and moral understanding of the world. The novels and plays in the course are classics because they both delight and instruct as they comment on the human condition. Students reading these works will learn to examine them based on genre and structure. In addition, students will be able to examine in depth the themes of these works, often with the help of critical essays provided in the books themselves.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**
- Students will gain an acquaintance with fine works in the English language
- Students will learn to examine works for their aesthetic and moral meaning
- Students will learn to examine works based on their genre and structure
- Students will learn to write persuasive essays and creative pieces in response to the works studied

**COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY:**
Kolbe Academy, operating under the principle of subsidiarity, provides course plans as a suggested course of study. It is still up to the parents to select suitable titles for their child to study. Parents considering a title may want to read the week-by-week synopsis provided in the course plans.

1. Asking the student to retell the portion of the work he or she has read that day is a good way to cultivate a solid memory of the work and develop the student’s ability to focus on the salient details.

2. Asking the student to predict what will happen next or in what way the main character might grow or change is a good way to foster a deeper moral understanding of the work.

3. In a first read-through, a firm grasp of the literal events is essential. In discussion, however, the ability to see thematic elements should be cultivated so that the student might gain a deeper understanding. Parents may use the Discussion ideas found under the **Key Points** section included each week in the course plans.

4. Examining the structure based on a standard plot chart that includes the inciting incident, complicating obstacles and setbacks, rising action, climax, and resolution is a very good way to unearth the deeper meaning of a work and discover the artistry of the writer.

5. There is a final exam for each book. It may be given in whole or in part at the discretion of the parent. Some of the final exams have longer short answer portions than others (10 questions). Trimming these longer sections might be in order. A good rule of thumb is to ask the student to answer those questions that came up in
discussion and to which he should know the answer and/or to include one or two questions that might challenge him, but which he should be able to answer if he reasons his way through.

6. The weekly essays are optional. However, pondering the essay topics and writing a response is a very good way to grow in analytical and reasoning ability and in the ability to give shape to one’s thoughts.

7. Use the last week of the course plan to catch up on reading, writing the essay, or reviewing for the exam.

**CHOOSING BOOKS FOR A YEAR’S COURSE OF STUDY:**

Parents, along with students, should choose six to eight titles to read over the course of the school year and record them on the Course of Study form that parents must submit to Kolbe Academy at the start of the high school year. Choose titles based on the student’s interest, the time allotted for the novel or play, the correspondence to thematic elements in history or theology, or the suitability of the reading level of the book in question. Parents are free to select books as they see fit. If they choose approximately half of the books listed in one year (6-7) and the same the following year, they will find that there is enough material here for two years of course work.

The chronological list below tells its own story. Shakespeare wrote plays that were presented to a wide audience; they were meant to entertain and teach in a public setting. He dealt with universal themes and drew heavily on stories that were already well known. Of course, he brought his own magnificent insights of the world and of human nature to his work, but he did not publish his own work in his lifetime. When publishers took up his work, they were hoping to earn a profit. Although Shakespeare was not one to sneer at turning a profit, he did not think to do so by publishing his plays. By the time Daniel Defoe wrote his novels the middle class in England was burgeoning. The novel was born under conditions that almost guaranteed that it would flourish. Literacy was on the rise, a new class of people had money in its pockets to spend on leisure, and a demand was present for stories of contemporary life, stories that did not exactly follow the patterns established by the writers of epics or medieval romance, stories that would instead emphasize the place of the individual in society. Of course, the change did not happen completely all at once. Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe could be termed a kind of *Odyssey*; however, his later novels could not be thought of as related to what had come before. Swift who was commenting on Defoe and other writers who wrote about exotic new locales in a way to appeal to the popular imagination (world exploration was in full-swing), did write with reference to the ancient writers, specifically Terence, the great satirist, and Homer, the great epic writer. When we meet Jane Austen, however, we are entering an artistic world that is engaged in thoroughly charting the moral growth made by the individual over time. In Mary Shelley, we see an author who, in drawing on the science of her time, is giving birth to a new genre—science fiction. In doing so she managed to comment on mankind in a way reminiscent of the Faust legends. Dickens perfected the art of the novel by creating a fictional world that mirrored the real world in the variety of its characters and complexity of its society. Oscar Wilde created a moral tale amid the moral drift of his times. C.S. Lewis added a spiritual dimension to the science fiction genre, and did the same for the epistolary novel, a form that had first appeared in the English speaking world with the novels of Samuel Richardson in the 18th Century. George Orwell gave us the model of the failed utopia or dystopia. He created a fable that was rooted in history, capable of unmasking the totalitarian leanings of our modern, secular, materialistic age. He was, of course, writing about the U.S.S.R., but his work suits our time as well.
COURSE SYLLABUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year of Original Publication</th>
<th>Course Plan Weeks##</th>
<th>Book Page Code</th>
<th>Kolbe Rec. Reading Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romeo &amp; Juliet</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>1597</td>
<td>4 weeks*</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>4 weeks*</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Lear</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>4 weeks*</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson Crusoe</td>
<td>Daniel Defoe</td>
<td>1719</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulliver’s Travels</td>
<td>Jonathan Swift</td>
<td>1726</td>
<td>5 weeks*</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride and Prejudice</td>
<td>Jane Austen</td>
<td>1813</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankenstein</td>
<td>Mary Shelley</td>
<td>1818</td>
<td>4 weeks*</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Twist</td>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuthering Heights</td>
<td>Emily Bronte</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>5 weeks*</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Expectations</td>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>6 weeks*</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Picture of Dorian Gray</td>
<td>Oscar Wilde</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>5 weeks*</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of the Silent Planet</td>
<td>C.S. Lewis</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Screwtape Letters</td>
<td>C.S. Lewis</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Farm</td>
<td>George Orwell</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

##Including a review week
*An optional additional week is included for those who want to read a critical essay on the work and complete a writing assignment based on it.

LITERATURE GENRES AND THEMES:

**Adventure/Intrigue:** Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver’s Travels, Oliver Twist

**Science Fiction:** Frankenstein, Out of the Silent Planet

**Love/Marriage:** Romeo and Juliet, Merchant of Venice, Pride and Prejudice, Wuthering Heights

**Failed Utopia:** Animal Farm

**Coming of Age:** Great Expectations

**Thematic Contrasts:**
- Justice vs. Mercy — The Merchant of Venice
- True power vs. False power — King Lear
- Appearance vs. Reality — The Picture of Dorian Gray
- Good vs. Evil (the spiritual battle) — The Screwtape Letters, The Fallen World
- World vs. the Unfallen World — Out of the Silent Planet