English · Revision

Key Literature Quotes

Short, flexible quotations from four set texts often studied at GCSE. Line wording and punctuation can vary slightly between editions, so check against your own copy.

Macbeth, William Shakespeare

Quote	Who, where	Why it's useful
"Fair is foul, and foul is fair"	Witches, 1.1	Appearance vs reality; a world turned upside down
"Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires"	Macbeth, 1.4	Guilt and secrecy before he has acted
"unsex me here"	Lady Macbeth, 1.5	Rejects expected gender roles
"look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't"	Lady Macbeth, 1.5	Deception; echoes the serpent in Eden
"vaulting ambition"	Macbeth, 1.7	Ambition as excessive and self-destructive
"A little water clears us of this deed"	Lady Macbeth, 2.2	Dismisses guilt; ironic later
"Out, damned spot!"	Lady Macbeth, 5.1	Guilt returns and destroys her mind
"Life's but a walking shadow"	Macbeth, 5.5	Despair and meaninglessness

Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare

Quote	Who, where	Why it's useful
"A pair of star-cross'd lovers"	Chorus, Prologue	Fate; the ending is known from the start
"My only love sprung from my only hate!"	Juliet, 1.5	Love and conflict intertwined
"What's in a name?"	Juliet, 2.2	Questions family identity
"These violent delights have violent ends"	Friar Laurence, 2.6	Foreshadows the tragedy
"A plague o' both your houses!"	Mercutio, 3.1	Blames the feud; a turning point
"O, I am fortune's fool!"	Romeo, 3.1	Blames fate rather than himself

A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens

Quote	Who, where	Why it's useful
"solitary as an oyster"	Narrator, Stave 1	Scrooge's isolation; a hard shell hiding something
"decrease the surplus population"	Scrooge, Stave 1	Cold attitude to poverty
"I wear the chain I forged in life"	Marley, Stave 1	Consequences of your own choices
"Mankind was my business"	Marley, Stave 1	Social responsibility, Dickens's central message
"This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want."	Ghost of Christmas Present, Stave 3	Warning to Victorian society
"as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man"	Narrator, Stave 5	Scrooge's complete redemption

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, R. L. Stevenson

Quote	Who, where	Why it's useful
"something troglodytic"	Utterson, Ch. 2	Hyde as primitive; fear of regression
"Satan's signature upon a face"	Utterson, Ch. 2	Evil visible in appearance
"with ape-like fury"	Maid's account, Ch. 4	Violence linked to Darwinian fears
"man is not truly one, but truly two"	Jekyll, Ch. 10	Duality of human nature
"pure evil"	Jekyll, Ch. 10	Hyde as the separated evil side

How to learn them

- Learn fewer quotes that work for many themes, rather than lots that work for one.
- For each quote, know one key word you could analyse.
- Test yourself from memory, then write a sentence using each one in an argument.