

# TEACHERS' OUTLINES FOR STUDIES IN ENGLISH

BASED ON THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
ADMISSION TO COLLEGE

BY  
GILBERT SYKES BLAKELY, A. M.

INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH IN THE MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL  
NEW YORK CITY



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STUDIES IN ENGLISH

W. P. 7

## PREFACE

THE following plans of study for the English texts commonly used in secondary schools are presented in the hope that they may be suggestive to teachers of English who are struggling with the various problems which confront them. Each teacher, of course, must work out his own plan in accordance with the needs of his pupils and the conditions under which he works; but, as it is helpful to observe the class-room work of other teachers, so it may be helpful to see a fellow teacher's plans of work. I wish to disclaim any desire to dogmatize about the methods or the details of teaching. If I have anywhere assumed a tone of authority, it has been merely for the sake of brevity in stating my opinions.

Three books on the teaching of English have recently appeared: *The Teaching of English* by Percival Chubb, *The Teaching of English* by Professors Carpenter, Baker, and Scott, and *Talks on Teaching Literature* by Arlo Bates. All of these are full of inspiration and suggestion for me as they doubtless are for hundreds of others; they ought to be within reach of every progressive teacher of English. The present

volume is essentially different from these in purpose. It aims, not at a discussion of the principles of teaching, but at the application of certain principles to the teaching of some of the books required for admission to college.

References by page or line to the book under discussion are to the texts of the Gateway Series.

For suggestions concerning the plan of the book and certain of its details, I am under obligations to Dr. Henry van Dyke. I desire also to express my thanks for helpful criticism to several of my fellow teachers in the Morris High School, especially to Mr. Harold E. Foster who has kindly read most of the manuscript.

G. S. BLAKELY.

THE MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL.

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# STUDIES IN ENGLISH

## I. THE TEACHING OF THE NOVEL

ALL will agree that the novel is one of the most important forms of literature for high school study. The fact that almost every boy and girl who is at all interested in reading likes the novel, gives the teacher an excellent opportunity to stimulate the pupil's love for literature and to help him to discriminate between what is true and what is false; between what is cheap and what is worth while. Moreover, the study of the novel is the study of life and character. It is of great human interest, and it may be made an important factor in developing the pupil's ambition, judgment, ideals, and character. Good stories grow in meaning with the growth of mental power. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are full of delightful stories for boys and girls, but these same stories, securely fixed in the youthful mind, gain a deeper meaning from experience as the child develops into the man or the woman. Furthermore, interest in a good story leads to other interests. It may encourage a love of nature, stimulating to closer observation. It may awaken a love of history, or of travel, or of some of the innumerable interests of human activity.



Unfortunately, young people's delight in the reading of the novel is a source of danger. The drama and the essay appear so full of difficulties that the student regards their study seriously, as a task, and finds it necessary to apply himself vigorously in order to master them. On the other hand, the novel is so delightful, so easy, that he looks upon it as a pastime. A superficial reading often gives him knowledge of many of the main facts, and a mistaken idea that he knows the story. It is the task of the teacher to get him to read with careful attention and with imagination keenly alive. When a fair mastery of the facts of the story has been gained, and clear mental images of the scenes portrayed and suggested have been formed, studies of plot, character, interpretation, etc., should follow. These studies, if they appeal to the class as reasonable, will stimulate thought and imagination and will help to form a basis for sound judgment and a habit of just criticism.

The practical plan here presented for the accomplishment of these ends involves three steps: first, preparation of the class for taking up the work; second, reading and study for the purpose of getting the facts; third, comprehensive study of the book as a whole, in addition to a comparison of it with other books. The purpose of the first step is to arouse an interest in approaching the story, and to prepare the pupil for an intelligent reading. In the case of some books it is of little importance, but in the case of others it is almost essential for success. Ap-

preciation of the difficulties of the book and of the limitations of his pupils will enable the teacher to make the wisest choice of his material.

The second step is certainly the most important because it is fundamental. Students often read a book without any adequate conception of the facts of which it treats. Even after honest endeavor they frequently have gross misconceptions and fail to see much that was intended for their observation. To keep the class alert and interested, and at the same time to see that the work has been well done, requires patience, tact, and ingenuity. Sometimes difficulties and consequent discouragement are avoided by assigning with the lesson a few general questions to aid the pupil in getting a connected idea of essential details. Sometimes the same result is reached by requiring the class to write in their notebooks brief summaries of each chapter. The recitation period gives the teacher an opportunity to arouse in the class a thorough interest in the work in hand. This can be done in a variety of ways. Different parts of the story may be told by the students; questions may be asked to test the understanding of certain passages, to enable the pupil to read between the lines, and to awaken curiosity; supplementary facts may be given by the teacher, or by members of the class, to throw light on certain parts of the story.

For the third step,—the study of the book as a whole,—the following topics are suggested:

Setting and situation, plot, characters, interpretation, method of narration, style, life and character of the author, comparison with other books. Although some of these topics may have been taken up in connection with previous study, they will be found none the less valuable at this more advanced stage of the work. Certain ones are of course more important than others. The method of narration and the style, for example, should always be treated lightly, if at all, since their consideration is rather for the maturer student. To reach the best results every topic that is studied should send the pupil again and again to the book to find definite answers to the questions given and to establish the proof of his opinions.

#### OUTLINE FOR THE STUDY OF IVANHOE

##### I. Preparation

The class will probably be able to recall from their previous study of Scott some interesting facts about the author. They will understand the book better, too, if they are somewhat familiar with the following topics:

The Norman Conquest.

Ideals of Chivalry.

Conditions of the Church.

The Crusades.

Story of King Richard up to his return from the Crusades.

## II. Reading and Study

There are advantages in a first rapid reading of the book before the more careful reading and class study, but for pupils unused to reading long books this is too much to ask in the case of *Ivanhoe*. The essential result to be attained in any event is familiarity with the details of the story.

## III. Study of the Book as a Whole

SETTING AND SITUATION.—When did the events of the story take place?

Locate upon some map or, better, draw a map to indicate the position of Sheffield, Ashby, York, and the other places connected with the story. In the opening chapters there are various details of the situation that are more important than the actual time and place, for example, condition of the country, and the relations of the people. Make a list of them.

Compare *Ivanhoe* with some other novel in regard to the definiteness and importance of the setting.

What do we know from the story of the means of traveling? (pp. 14-16, 192-195, etc.); of the conditions of the clergy? (pp. 17-20, 468-474, etc.); of the relations of the Normans and Saxons? of the habits of the people? of the feudal system?

PLOT.—How long a time is involved from the beginning to the end of the story?

Are there frequent surprises, or do the events occur as we expect them? Illustrate.

How does Scott arouse our interest in the development of an action? Take the Tournament, for example, and show how he arouses our expectation before he relates the event.

When do you first suspect that the Palmer is a person disguised? How does the author keep us in suspense as to his identity? (pp. 60-62, 90, etc.).

Find other instances of this device for maintaining our interest in the story (see p. 134).

Point out several events that appear, upon second thought, to be improbable. How has Scott tried to make them seem probable, so that the reader's interest will not be lost?

Give an illustration of the way in which Scott links together the various groups of characters. If the author has succeeded in so combining the interests of each group that the outcome of the main action—the success or failure of the hero and heroine—means the success or failure of the other groups, then he has secured unity of plot. Is there unity of plot here?

After the opening scene in the forest, the next important one is in the dining-room at Rotherwood. Point out in detail the incidents that lead to this scene.

In the dining-room scene what suggestions are given for the further development of the plot?

What is the next scene of importance? What incidents lead up to it?

There are, in all, eight or nine important scenes. Make a list of them, note the train of incidents that leads up to each, and also the germs of future development that each contains.

Each of these scenes marks a climax of interest. Is any one so much more important than the others, that you can say it is the climax of the book? Are any of them merely episodes that might be omitted without making the action incomplete?

How far does Brian de Bois-Guilbert influence the course of events? How far does Isaac influence them? Richard? Rebecca?

CHARACTERS.—Who is the hero? Why?

Who is the heroine? Why?

Arrange the important characters (there are from fifteen to twenty) in three or four groups according to the way they seem to be associated in the development of the story. Which characters are historical? Which, if any, are intended to represent types or classes of men?

Are any of them to be contrasted with each other?

Are the characters of King Richard and Prince John represented here as they are shown in history?

Note the chief traits of Cedric, Athelstane, and Gurth. Remember that Scott was trying to portray Saxon character. What are the individual traits of each? What have they in common?

What, if anything, in Rowena compels your admiration of her? What, if anything, is lacking to make her truly a heroic figure?

How does Rebecca compare with Rowena in the latter particular?

Do the principal characters remain the same from beginning to end, or do they show development?

Do we become acquainted with these characters by what they say and do; by what the author says of them; or by what they say of one another?

INTERPRETATION.—It is fair to suppose in every novel that the author has had a more or less distinct purpose in writing it. It may be to present in life-like pictures some dramatic events in history; or to paint vivid scenes that illustrate the spirit of an age; or to hold up ideals of bravery, patriotism, patience, devotion, or some other virtue; or to show the working out of some great truth or principle of life.

What seems to you the purpose of the author in *Ivanhoe*? What ideals of character does he hold up? What service has he done for the reader of history?

METHOD OF NARRATION.—Who tells the story? Would it be difficult to rearrange the plan so that *Ivanhoe* or some other character should tell it? Why?

Does the narrator speak from the standpoint of one who somehow or other knows all that the characters do and think and feel, or of one who recounts merely his own feelings and what he sees and hears?

Compare *Ivanhoe* in this respect with *The Vicar of Wakefield*, or with some other novel.

STYLE.—Does Scott attempt to reproduce the language of a time other than his own? Does he introduce dialect? Do the characters talk naturally as we should expect persons of different birth and education to talk, or do they talk alike?

Note how Scott describes an outdoor scene (p. 6); a man (p. 7); a scene of action (pp. 300-306). Try to imitate his methods in descriptions of your own.

Note the parts of the story where the movement of events is very rapid (pp. 322-330), and others where the author introduces description or exposition (pp. 148-152) to retard the movement.

Do you find the sentences natural and easy, or formal and hard to read? Are there many unfamiliar words?

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR.—What are the main facts of Scott's boyhood? his education? his professional career? his success as a poet? his change from poetry to prose? his success as a novelist? his financial distress? his struggle to meet the demands of the law and of his own honor?

Would you judge from *Ivanhoe* that the author was a man of learning? a lover of nature? fond of social life? fond of animals? fond of children?

Write what you think we have reason to believe of Scott's character from reading this book.



## OUTLINE FOR THE STUDY OF THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD

**I. Preparation**

It is well to suggest to pupils who have read *Ivanhoe* and now turn to the *Vicar of Wakefield* that the latter is not a romance, but a novel of life and manners; not an exciting story of heroic deeds and wonderful escapes, but a story that paints clear pictures of simple life, quiet humor, and true sentiment. A few facts of Goldsmith's boyhood and young manhood should be dwelt on in order to show his familiarity with the country, the church, and with other matters treated in the story. Other topics of interest are the circumstances that led to the publication of the book; the comparative newness of the novel in literature; eighteenth century essays, like the *De Coverley Papers*; similarity between such essays and this novel.

**II. Reading and Study**

To become familiar with the details of this story is simple, but students are likely to overlook little references to the customs and manners of the time, and to fail to use their imaginations in picturing the beautiful but simple scenes of country life.

**III. Study of the Book as a Whole**

SETTING AND SITUATION.—Find five or six references in the story that throw light on the time when the events are supposed to have taken place. (See customs of