

## Ideas for Matura Specials

### What is a special topic?

Your special topic for the oral final exam must be an independent study project. You may use topics dealt with in class as a starting point, but your focus and the literature you use must be your own choice. Basically there are three types of projects you can do:

- **Author Study:** Read two to three books plus a few stories by one author. Identify his/her characteristics (themes, style,...) Include some biographical information if relevant.
- **Civilization Study:** Find a well-defined topic and thesis. Don't just paraphrase info from geography or history books.  
e.g.: "The two sides of the Civil Rights Movement in the US: M.L.King and MalcolmX" Read two to three books about your topic. A mixture of non-fiction and fiction would be most interesting.
- **Theme Study in Literature:** Read two to three books + a few short texts that treat a similar theme. Compare and contrast them, find a main focus, similarities and differences...

The **examples** below might give you ideas. Go to the library and browse. Choose an author who you really like or find a topic or theme that truly interests you. Make an outline for your project. The **outline** should include:

Topic/Title:

Five questions you want to answer in your project:

Titles of books:

Titles of stories/ short texts or poems (if possible at this stage)

Hand in your outline by .....

Read at least one book this quarter. Keep a reading diary and mark interesting passages in your book. Read the second book during quarter III and finish your project at the beginning of quarter IV. You will be too busy preparing for the finals after that.

You may of course include any other literature that you have read in addition to the 2-3 new books.

### Your project folder must include:

- Title and outline
- Bibliography : Please add copies of any short texts you have used (stories, articles, internet pages, poems)
- Answers to your 5 questions: Do not write a project paper in form of a structured literary analysis or essay. Lists, individual paragraphs, answers to your questions, background information, subtopics... are o.k.

Show me that you have worked on the topic, make sure your focus is clear to me (otherwise I might ask you questions you cannot answer).

Attention: Unstructured doesn't mean messy!!!! Hand in a well-organized folder of your work.

Organizing your ideas in the folder will also help you organize them in your brain.

**Ideas:** This is a rough brainstorming of possible topics that have worked well in the past. Use your imagination and expand the list. Define your very personal focus or suggest a new topic that truly interests you.

**Author Studies:**

Isaac Asimov: read two Asimov novels, find similarities, compare to other well-known sci-fi stories (e.g. Starwars, Frankenstein, Vonnegut...)	<i>I, Robot, The Caves of Steel ...</i>
Kurt Vonnegut	<i>Cat's Cradle, Slaughterhouse Five, "The Euphio Question" and others</i>
Dan Brown	<i>The DaVinci Code, Angels &amp; Demons, Deception Point...</i>
John Steinbeck	<i>Of Mice and Men, The Pearl, Cannery Row</i>
Virginia Woolf	<i>Mrs. Dalloway, A Room of One's Own, Letters</i>
Ian McEwan	<i>The Cement Garden, Enduring Love, Atonement, Comfort of Strangers, Amsterdam, Short stories from First Love, Last Rites...</i>
Ernest Hemingway	<i>The Old Man and the Sea, A Farewell to Arms</i>
John Irving	<i>The World According to Garp A Prayer for Owen Meany The Hotel New Hampshire A 158 pound Marriage...</i>
Paul Auster	<i>The Music of Chance Mr. Vertigo Leviathan The New York Trilogy The Book of Illusions</i>
Dorothy Parker	Poetry and Short Stories
Graham Greene	<i>The Third Man The Fallen Idol</i>
Rebecca Wells	<i>Little Altars Everywhere Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood</i>
Edgar Allan Poe: Madness and Romantic Features, Father of crime-stories,	Poems, stories, Theory of Composition, "The Tell-tale Heart"
E.M. Forster	<i>A Room with a View A Passage to India</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray An Ideal Husband</i>
J.D. Salinger	<i>The Catcher in the Rye "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" Franny and Zooey, Nine Stories...</i>
Nicholas Evans	<i>The Horse Whisperer The Loop</i>
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>The Great Gatsby Tender is the Night "Winter Dreams"</i>
Jamaica Kincaid	<i>A Small Place Annie John...</i>
Jennifer Johnston	<i>Two Moons The Christmas Tree</i>
Richard Wright	<i>Black Boy Uncle Tom's Children Native Son</i>
George Orwell	<i>1984</i>

	<i>Down and Out in Paris and London</i> <i>Animal Farm</i>
Jane Austen: Manners and Customs in 19 <sup>th</sup> Century England	<i>Sense &amp; Sensibility</i> <i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i> <i>Emma</i>
Barbara Kingsolver	<i>The Bean Trees</i> <i>Pigs in Heaven</i> <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i> <i>Homeland and other Stories</i> <i>High Tide in Tucson (essays)</i> <i>Small Wonder (essays)</i>
Erica Jong	<i>Fear of Flying</i> <i>How to Save your Own Life</i> <i>Sappho's Leap</i>

### Theme Studies

Science fiction through the ages	Compare: Vonnegut, <i>Cat's Cradle</i> , Asimov, <i>I, Robot</i> and <i>Frankenstein</i> , <i>Star wars</i> , ...
The Romeo and Juliet theme in literature	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i> ...
Mental Problems in Literature	<i>The Bell Jar</i> , <i>Portnoy's Complaint</i> , <i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> , <i>American Psycho</i> , <i>Portnoy's complaint</i> , <i>Play it as it Lays</i> , <i>Of Mice and Men</i> ...
The Great Depression	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> , <i>The Great Gatsby</i> , <i>Mr. Vertigo</i> , <i>Rethinking the Great Depression</i> (Gene Smiley) <i>Hard Times</i> (Studs Terkel) or internet
Heroes and Antiheroes in American War Novels	<i>Catch 22</i> , <i>Slaughterhouse Five</i> , <i>The Naked and the Dead</i> , <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> ...
True Crime in Fiction	<i>In Cold Blood</i> , Poe, "The Mystery of Marie Roget" Huxley, "The Gioconda Smile"
Perceptions of God in Literature	<i>A Prayer for Owen Meany</i> , <i>The Life of Pi</i> , <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>
A critical view of religion	<i>Poisonwood Bible</i> , <i>Cat's Cradle</i> , <i>DaVinci Code</i> <i>The Life of Pi</i> ... <i>Go Tell It On The Mountain</i>
Conformity and Rebellion: Does it pay to be different?	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> , <i>The World According to Garp</i> , <i>Portnoy's Complaint</i> <i>The Color Purple</i> <i>Fear of Flying</i> <i>The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner</i> <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>
Examples of Manipulation in Literature Utopia - Distopia	<i>Animal Farm</i> , <i>Nineteen-Eighty-Four</i> <i>Brave New World</i> <i>Lord of the Flies</i>
Split Personalities	<i>Dr. Jerkyl and Mr. Hyde</i>

	<i>American Psycho</i> <i>The Picture of Dorian Grey</i>
Women Writers between the World Wars	Carson McCullers, <i>The Heart is a Lonely Hunter</i> Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Dorothy Parker, Poems
Free Will versus Mind-control	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i> , <i>Breakfast of Champions</i> (Vonnegut) “The Euphio Question” 1984, <i>Brave New World</i>
Extraordinary Characters in Contemporary American Fiction	<i>A Prayer For Owen Meany</i> <i>The Walls Came Tumbling Down</i> (Robert Anton Wilson)
Immigration Problems in the USA	<i>Tortilla Curtain</i> , <i>Green Card</i> (film) <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> ...
Death Penalty	<i>Facts and Figures</i> John Grisham, <i>The Chamber</i> Sister Helen Prejean, <i>Dead Man Walking</i>
Jewish American Humor as a Means of Coming to Terms with the Past	<i>Portnoy’s Complaint</i> , <i>Fear of Flying</i> <i>After</i> Woody Allen, <i>Life is Beautiful</i> (film)
Gangs in Great Britain	John Davison, <i>Gangsta</i> Courtia Newland, <i>The Scholar</i> Anthony Burgess, <i>A Clockwork Orange</i>
Stock Characters in Crime Novels The different types of detectives... Development of crime lit...	Grisham, <i>The Firm</i> , <i>The Pelican Brief</i> ... Agatha Christie, <i>The Mirror Crack’d</i> ... Truman Capote, <i>In Cold Blood</i>
The Troubles (Northern Ireland)	Polit. Background <i>Cal</i> ...
Women’s Liberation in the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Kate Chopin, <i>The Awakening</i> “The Story of an Hour”, “Regret”, Jane Austen, <i>Persuasion</i>
Two Women who don’t want to play the game	<i>The Bell Jar</i> <i>Play it as it Lays</i>
On the Road in the United States	Jack Kerouac, <i>On the Road</i> Andy Soutter, <i>The Drive-thru Museum</i> <i>Easy Rider</i> (movie) <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> (river)
The Sixties in Literature	Anne Rivers Siddons, <i>Downtown</i> Jack Kerouac, <i>On the Road</i>
Pedophiles in Literature	<i>Lolita</i> <i>The End of Alice</i> “Butterflies”...
Lost at Sea	<i>Moby Dick</i> <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i> <i>The Life of Pi</i>
Narcissistic Characters in Literature	<i>American Psycho</i> <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>
Power through Fear:	Golding, <i>Lord of the Flies</i> <i>Brave New World</i> , 1984