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A German Classic: Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* Participation Guidelines for Sixth-Formers

We are delighted to announce the launch of the 2020 edition of 'A German Classic'. Although we are unfortunately unable to run it as a competition this year, we would still like to invite you to read with us Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912) – one of the most famous novellas in German literature and a masterpiece of European modernism. In his inimitably elegant and sumptuous style, Mann tells a transgressive story of Gustav von Aschenbach, an aging German writer, who falls in love with Tadzio, a teenage boy from Poland, during a holiday in Venice in the midst of a cholera epidemic. Often hailed as a break-through work for the queer community, *Der Tod in Venedig* might resonate differently now, in the era of the #metoo movement and the coronavirus pandemic.

You can sign up for free to receive a physical copy of the German original and an English translation of Mann's novella, watch a specially recorded lecture that will guide you through the text, and have the opportunity to get feedback on your written commentary on a passage from *Der Tod in Venedig* from an Oxford academic. While logistic challenges this year mean that we are unable to compile extensive study materials and conduct our usual essay competition, we hope that you will want to join us for an exploration of 'A German Classic' in this adapted format.

'A German Classic' was launched in 2017 thanks to a generous donation by Jonathan Gaisman, QC. It is designed to celebrate a different literary classic each year and encourage in-depth study by creating a wide range of resources that open up different perspectives on the concerns at the heart of the work. The links to interviews and discussions, articles and performances remain available on our website to inspire ongoing interest in these works beyond the year of the competition. So far, we have featured Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (in 2017), Friedrich Schiller's *Maria Stuart* (in 2018), and E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* (in 2019).



ELIGIBILITY

Participants must fulfil the following requirements as of September 2020:

- be beginning their final year of full-time study at a secondary school in the UK (upper-sixth form, Year 13 or S6 in Scotland);
- be between the ages of 16 and 18;
- hold a GCSE, IGCSE or equivalent qualification in German offered in the UK;
- be resident in the United Kingdom.

Participants are not, however, expected to have prior experience of studying German literature.

PARTICIPATION

All interested students should email the German Classic Coordinator, Dr Karolina Watroba (germanclassic@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk), as soon as possible. We will be accepting new participants until the end of July. Students will receive free of charge:

- **Physical copies of the German text of *Der Tod in Venedig* and an English translation.**

Shipping will be administered by the Blackwell's online bookshop. Students will need to provide an address in the UK to which they would like the books shipped, by which they consent to having their address passed on to Blackwell's. Shipping may take up to a few weeks. Editions received may vary as they will depend on the availability of stock. Since we depend on the availability of stock, which is currently subject to potential disruption, we cannot unfortunately guarantee shipping: orders will be placed on a first come, first served basis.

- **Access to a specially recorded, hour-long, university-style online lecture.**

The lecture will introduce Thomas Mann's life and work, guide students through *Der Tod in Venedig*, and discuss additional resources on the text that are freely available online.

- **A choice of three short commentary passages from *Der Tod in Venedig* alongside a guide on how to write a good commentary.**

Students will be encouraged to write and submit their commentaries (c. 1500 words) by email by 1 September 2020. All students who submit a commentary by this date will receive individual written feedback on their work by 1 October 2020. The feedback will not include any ranking or mark. It will be designed purely as informal academic comment on the piece of work submitted.

We would like to ask all students who request access to these materials to let us know the name and type of their school (non-selective state-maintained; selective state-maintained; non-selective independent; selective independent; other) so we can monitor whether we are reaching a diverse range of schools around the country.