Master of Arts in English Exam Reading List

This list is not designed to be restrictive; you may read as much as you like from any period in which you have an interest. Nor should you try simply to memorize the plots, characters or most famous lines from each work on the list; we are more interested in seeing how you apply a deep knowledge of some of these texts to an informed discussion of their formal structure, cultural backgrounds, audiences, and critical histories. To this end, we recommend the following as guides in your study:

♦ Introductory material and selections from one or more of the major teaching anthologies of British and American Literature (Norton, Longman, Broadview, Heath, etc.)
♦ *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* (in particular, entries on major schools of thought such as Marxist, feminist, historicist, psychoanalytic, gender, critical race, and post-colonial theories, as well as entries on literary movements and historical periods)
♦ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*

Successful examinations will show that a student has a sense of the literary periods covered, a sense of key developments in literary history, and some acquaintance with the critical debates which have shaped and challenged the current canon.

I. Old English (in translation)

*Beowulf*
Prose: Ælfric’s *Life of St. Edmund* and Wulfstan’s *Sermon of ‘Wolf’ to the English*
Selections from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

II. Middle English (Chaucer in Middle English; other texts in translation or original)

lyrics: selected texts such as those in MS Harley 2253 (ed. G. L. Brook) or the anthology *Middle English Lyrics*, ed. Luria and Hoffman (Norton, 1974)
Chaucer: the “General Prologue” and at least five of the *Canterbury Tales*
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Pearl
Langland: selections from *Piers Plowman*
Middle English drama: selected mystery and morality plays, including *The Second Shepherd’s Play* and *Everyman*
III. The English Renaissance and Seventeenth Century

Thomas More: *Utopia*
Sir Thomas Wyatt: selected poetry
Henry Howard: Earl of Surrey: selected poetry
Edmund Spenser: “Letter to Raleigh,” *The Faerie Queen*, Book I; *The Shepheards Calendar* (Dedicatory Epistle and several selections); *Amoretti* (selections)
Christopher Marlowe: *Hero and Leander*, *Doctor Faustus*
Sir Philip Sidney: *An Apology for Poesy*; *Astrophel and Stella* (selections)
William Shakespeare: *Sonnets* (selections); *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and five other plays, balanced among histories, comedies and tragedies; selected sonnets (Norton)
John Donne: *Songs and Sonnets* (Selections); *The First Anniversary*; *The Holy Sonnets* (selections); *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (selections)
Francis Bacon: *Essays* (selected); either *The Advancement of Learning* or *The New Atlantis*
Ben Jonson: *Volpone*, selected poetry
John Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi*
Andrew Marvell: “The Garden,” “To His Coy Mistress,” “An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland”; at least four other poems
Seventeenth-century lyric poets: at least four poems by each of the following: Herrick, Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne, Carew, Suckling, Crashaw

IV. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century

Dryden: *Mac Flecknoe*, and "An Essay of Dramatic Poesie" (selections)
Wycherley: *The Country Wife*
Rochester: "A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind"
Behn: *Oroonoko* or *The Rover*
Congreve: *The Way of the World*
Gay: *The Beggar's Opera*
Early Eighteenth-century Novel: Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe* or *Moll Flanders*; Richardson: *Pamela* or *Clarissa*; Fielding: *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones*
Swift: *Gulliver’s Travels*, “A Modest Proposal,” and at least two poems
Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*, *Moral Epistles* 1 and 3; *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and at least one other poem
Sheridan or Goldsmith: *The Rivals* or *The School for Scandal* or *She Stoops to Conquer*
Johnson: “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” “Preface to Shakespeare,” and *Rasselas*
Boswell: *Life of Samuel Johnson* (excerpts)
Later Eighteenth-century Novel: one of the following: Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*; Smollett: *Humphry Clinker*; Burney, *Evelina*; or Radcliffe, *The Italian*
V. Romantics/19thC

Blake: *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Songs of Innocence and Experience* (at least 4 from each)

Wordsworth/Coleridge: From the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads: Ancient Mariner, Tinturn Abbey, Simon Lee, We are 7*

Wordsworth: Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802); Two Book Prelude (1799), “Ode: Intimations of Immortality,”

Coleridge: *Biographia Literaria*, Chapters XIII-XIV and XVII; “Kubla Khan,” “Christabel,”

“Dejection: An Ode,”

Byron: *Manfred, Don Juan*, Cantos I-IV


Keats: "The Eve of St. Agnes," the five major odes, and one other poem

Hemans: From “Records of Woman”: Properzia Rossi

Lamb: "Old China"

Austen: *Pride and Prejudice or Emma*

Bronte, E.: *Wuthering Heights*

Bronte, C.: *Jane Eyre*

Dickens: *David Copperfield or Great Expectations or Bleak House*

Thackeray: *Vanity Fair*

Eliot, George: *Middlemarch or Mill on the Floss*

Hardy: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles or Jude the Obscure*

Tennyson: selections from *In Memoriam* (Norton); “Lady of Shalott,” “Ulysses,” “The Passing of Arthur,” “Crossing the Bar,” and “Tithonus.”

Browning, R.: “My Last Duchess,” “The Bishop Orders His Tomb…,” “Caliban upon Setebos,”

“Childe Roland from the Dark Tower Came”


Browning, E.B.: “Aurora Leigh” (books 1, 2, and 5)

Rossetti, C.: “Goblin Market”

VI: American Literature to 1900

Bradstreet, Taylor, Wheatley, Freneau: Three poems each

Edwards: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

Franklin: *Autobiography*

Irving: "Rip Van Winkle"

Cooper: *The Pioneers or The Last of the Mohicans*

Poe: "The Philosophy of Composition" and "Twice-Told Tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Review" and two short stories

Emerson: "Nature" and two essays from the following: "The American Scholar," "Self-Reliance,"

"The Divinity School Address," and "The Poet"

Thoreau: *Walden*

Douglass: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)

Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (selections)
Hawthorne: *The Scarlet Letter* and two tales  
Melville: *Moby Dick* and either *Billy Budd* or "Benito Cereno"  
Two poems by one of the following: Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell  
James: "The Art of Fiction"; *Portrait of a Lady* or *The Ambassadors*;  
Twain: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*  
Chesnutt: *The Conjure Woman* or *The Marrow of Tradition*  
Chopin: *The Awakening*

**VII: 20th Century**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*  
Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*  
James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or *Ulysses*  
D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*  
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse*  
G. B. Shaw, *Man and Superman*  
Sean O’Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*  
J. M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*  
W. B. Yeats, selected poems  
W. H. Auden, selected poems  
Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*  
Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine*  
Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*  
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*  
Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*  
W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*  
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*  
Willa Cather, *My Antonia*  
William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*  
Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*  
Richard Wright, *Native Son*  
Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man*  
Ezra Pound, selected poems  
Robert Frost, selected poems  
Wallace Stevens, selected poems
William Carlos Williams, selected poems
Eugene O’Neill, *A Long Day’s Journey into Night*
Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
One play by Shepard, Mamet, Hwang, or Kushner
Poems by Jarrell, Lowell, Bishop, Plath, Ginsberg, Rich, Giovanni, Baraka, and Lorde
Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*