

**Master of Arts in English Exam Reading List**  
**Literature, Criticism, and Textual Studies Concentration**

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, of key developments in literary history, and of the critical debates that have shaped and challenged the current canon.

**I. Old English Literature (in translation)**

*Beowulf*

Selected shorter poems, including *Cædmon's Hymn*, *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Wife's Lament*, and some Exeter Book *Riddles*  
*Ælfric*, *Life of St. Edmund*

Wulfstan, *Sermon of 'Wolf' to the English*

Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (selections)

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

Thomas Malory, *Morte D'Arthur* (excerpts)

Geoffrey Chaucer, the "General Prologue" and at least five of the *Canterbury Tales*

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

*Pearl*

William Langland, *Piers Plowman* (selections)

Middle English drama: selected mystery and morality plays, including *The Second Shepherd's Play* and *Everyman*

**III. The English Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century Literature**

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 Shepherdes Calender* (Dedicatory Epistle and several selections); *Amoretti* (selections)

Christopher Marlowe, "Hero and Leander" and *Doctor Faustus*

Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy* and *Astrophel and Stella* (selections)

William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* (selections), *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and five other plays, balanced among histories, comedies, and tragedies  
 John Donne, *Songs and Sonnets* (selections), *The First Anniversary*, *The Holy Sonnets* (selections)  
 Francis Bacon, *Essays* (selected) and either *The Advancement of Learning* or *The New Atlantis*  
 Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, selected poetry  
 Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (selections)  
 John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*  
 Andrew Marvell, “The Garden,” “To His Coy Mistress,” “An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland,” and at least four other poems  
 Seventeenth-century lyric poets: at least four poems by each of the following: George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw, Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, and Katherine Philips  
 John Milton, “Lycidas,” *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, and *Aeropagitica*

#### IV. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature

John Dryden, “MacFlecknoe” and “An Essay of Dramatic Poesie” (selections)  
 William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*; or William Congreve, *The Way of the World*  
 John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, “A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind”  
 Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* or *The Rover*  
 John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera*  
 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* or *Moll Flanders*  
 Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* or *Clarissa*  
 Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones*  
 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, “A Modest Proposal,” and at least two poems  
 Alexander Pope, “The Rape of the Lock,” *Moral Epistles 1* and *3*, “Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,” and at least one other poem  
 Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, at least four numbers. Suggestions: 6, 21, 58, 61, 62, 63, 65, 69, 105, 112, 113, 117, 120, 125, 160, 226, 267, 409, 411, 412, 420, 421, 465, 519  
 Richard Sheridan, *The Rivals* or *The School for Scandal*; or Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*  
 Samuel Johnson, “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” “Preface to Shakespeare,” and *Rasselas*  
 James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson* (excerpts)  
 James Thomson, “Winter” from *The Seasons*  
 Thomas Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” and “Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West”  
 William Collins, “Ode on the Poetical Character”  
 Oliver Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village”  
 One of the following: Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*; Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*; Frances Burney, *Evelina*, *Cecilia* or *Camilla*; Ann Radcliffe: *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or *The Italian*

#### V. Nineteenth-Century British Literature

Charlotte Smith, “Written at the Close of Spring,” “To Sleep,” “To Night,” “Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex,” *Beachy Head*  
 William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (full text with illustrations)  
 William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), “We Are Seven,” “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,” “Strange fits of Passion have I known,” “She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways,” “Three Years she Grew,” “A Slumber did my Spirit Seal,” “Ode: Intimations of Immortality,” “Composed upon Westminster Bridge,” “The World is too Much with Us,”

“London, 1802,” and the two-part *Prelude* (1799)  
 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapters XIII-XIV and XVII; “Kubla Khan,”  
 “Christabel,” “Dejection: An Ode,” “Frost at Midnight,” and “The Rime of the Ancient  
 Mariner”  
 Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Mont Blanc,” “Adonais,” *A Defence of Poetry*, “Ode to the West  
 Wind,” “Alastor,” “Ozymandias,” “To Wordsworth,” and “England in 1819”  
 George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (Cantos I-IV), “Darkness,” “She Walks in Beauty,” “On This Day  
 I Complete my Thirty-Sixth Year,” *The Giaour*  
 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*  
 John Keats, “When I have Fears that I may Cease to Be,” “The Eve of St. Agnes,” “La Belle  
 Dame Sans Merci,” “Bright Star,” “Ode to Psyche,” “Ode to a Nightingale,” “Ode on a  
 Grecian Urn,” “Ode on Melancholy,” “Ode on Indolence,” and “Lamia”  
 Felicia Hemans, “Properzia Rossi” and “Casabianca”  
 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice* or *Mansfield Park* or *Emma* or  
*Persuasion*  
 Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*  
 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*  
 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* or *Great Expectations* or *Bleak House* or *Our Mutual  
 Friend*  
 George Eliot, *Middlemarch*  
 Thomas Hardy, one of the following: *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of  
 the d’Urbervilles*, or *Jude the Obscure*  
 Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*  
 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, selections from *In Memoriam* (Norton), “The Lady of Shalott,” “Ulysses”  
 Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess” and “Porphyria’s Lover”  
 Matthew Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” and “Dover Beach”  
 Elizabeth Barrett, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*  
 Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”

## VI: American Literature to 1900

William Bradford or John Smith or William Byrd II, selections from one of the Histories of  
 one of these authors  
 Anne Bradstreet, “The Prologue [To Her Book],” “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” “Upon  
 the Burning of Our House, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1666,” and Letter “To My Dear Children”  
 Edward Taylor, “The Preface” to *God’s Determinations*, “Huswifery,” Preparatory  
 Meditations, First Series #8 [“I kening through Astronomy Divine”], Preparatory  
 Meditations, Second Series, #50 [“The Artists Hand more gloriously bright”]  
 Phillip Freneau, “The Wild Honey Suckle,” “The Indian Burying Ground,” “The Hurricane,”  
 “On Mr. Paine’s Rights of Man”  
 Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George  
 Whitfield,” “To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth. . .,” and “To His Excellency  
 General Washington”  
 Samson Occom, *A Short Narrative of my Life*  
 Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” and “Personal Narrative”  
 Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (selections)  
 Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (selections)  
 Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life* (selections)  
 Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”  
 One of the following: Hannah Foster, *The Coquette*; or Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte  
 Temple*; or Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers* or *The Last of the Mohicans*  
 Black Hawk, *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak* or *Black Hawk*  
 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Raven,” three short stories (including either “The Purloined Letter” or “Murders in the Rue Morgue”), and “The Philosophy of Composition”  
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, “Self-Reliance,” and “The Poet”  
 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (selections; suggested: chapters 1 to 12, 17, 18)  
 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845 edition)  
 Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (selections)  
 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* and two tales  
 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* and either *Billy Budd, Sailor* or “Benito Cereno”  
 Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,” “Preface” to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”  
 Emily Dickinson, ten poems. Suggestions (Franklin numbers): 39, 112, 122, 207, 225, 236, 339, 320, 340, 347, 359, 373, 409, 448, 479, 591, 598, 620, 764, 1096, 1263, 1577, 1668, 1773  
 Two poems by William Cullen Bryant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, or Lydia Sigourney  
 Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* or *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*  
 Frank Norris, *McTeague*; or Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*  
 Henry James, either *The American* or *The Portrait of a Lady*; “The Art of Fiction”  
 Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*  
 Charles Waddell Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman* or *The Marrow of Tradition*  
 Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*  
 Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories*

## VII. Fiction and Nonfiction, 1900 to 1945

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, or *The Secret Agent*  
 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*  
 Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* or *The Age of Innocence*  
 Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*  
 Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* or *The Professor’s House*  
 James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or *Ulysses*  
 Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse*  
 One of the following: Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* or *Passing*; or Jean Toomer, *Cane*; or Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
 F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*; or Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*  
 William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, or *Absalom, Absalom!*

## VIII. Fiction and Nonfiction, 1945 to present

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*  
 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* or *Pale Fire*  
 Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” “Revelation,” and “Everything That Rises Must Converge”; or Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*, or *The Evening Redness in the West* or *The Road*  
 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* or *Arrow of God*; or Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *A Grain of Wheat*  
 Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* or *Beloved*  
 One of the following (postmodern): Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*; or Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*; or Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*; or Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*; or Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

- One of the following (Native American): N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*; or Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*; or Diane Glancy, *Pushing the Bear*
- One of the following (South Asian): Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*; or Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*; or Anita Desai, *Feasting Fasting*; or Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance*
- One of the following (African): J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* or *Waiting for the Barbarians*; or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* or *Americanah*; or Nadine Gordimer, *July's People*; or Nuruddin Farah, *Maps*
- One of the following (Caribbean): Jamaica Kincaid, *The Autobiography of My Mother*; or George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*; or Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow*; or V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas* or *The Mimic Men*; or Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*; or Earl Lovelace, *Salt*
- One of the following (contemporary): David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*; or W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*; or Junot Díaz, *Drown*; or Art Spiegelman, *Maus*; or Alice Munro, *Friend of My Youth* or *Too Much Happiness*; or Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*; or Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*; or Ali Smith, *Hotel World*; or Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*; or Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

### IX. Poetry, 1900 to 1950

- W.B. Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "Easter, 1916," "The Second Coming," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Among School Children," and "The Circus Animals' Desertion"
- T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*
- Gertrude Stein, "Picasso," *Tender Buttons* (selections), and "Susie Asado"
- Robert Frost, "Mending Wall," "The Road Not Taken," "Birches," "Fire and Ice," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and "Design"
- Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "The Snow Man," and "Of Modern Poetry"
- William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All," "To Elsie," "The Red Wheelbarrow," and "This is Just to Say"
- Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro" and *The Cantos* (I, II)
- Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "The Weary Blues," "Song for a Dark Girl," "Hard Daddy," and "Harlem"
- W.H. Auden, "Lullaby," "As I Walked Out One Evening," "Musée des Beaux Arts," "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," "September 1, 1939"

### X. Poetry, 1945 to present

- Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish," "The Armadillo," "In the Waiting Room," and "One Art"
- Robert Lowell, "Skunk Hour," and "For the Union Dead"
- Gwendolyn Brooks, "A Song in the Front Yard," "We Real Cool," and "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till"
- Philip Larkin, "Church Going," "High Windows," and "This Be the Verse"
- Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" and "A Supermarket in California"
- John Ashbery, "Some Trees," "Soonest Mended," and "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror"
- Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," "Diving into the Wreck," and "Twenty-One Love Poems" (selections)
- Derek Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa" and *Omeros* (selections)
- Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song," "Daddy," and "Lady Lazarus"

## **XI. Modern and Contemporary Drama**

George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Major Barbara*, or *Heartbreak House*

J. M. Synge, *Riders to the Sea* or Sean O'Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*

Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, or *A Long Day's Journey into Night*

One of the following: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*; or Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* or *Endgame*

Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*; or Athol Fugard, "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys

Caryl Churchill, *Vinegar Tom*, *Cloud Nine*, or *Top Girls*

Derek Walcott, *Pantomime* or *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

One of the following: Harold Pinter, *The Homecoming*; Sam Shepard, *Buried Child*; or Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*

One of the following: David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*; Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*; or Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*