

Preparatory Reading List for English

Welcome to Downing! We hope you find the following advice helpful in preparing to commence your English studies with us in October 2018.

Please use the reading lists below to prepare yourself over the summer. You should read all the primary texts listed, and as many of the asterisked secondary texts as you can before the beginning of term. The list of secondary texts—though not mandatory reading—is designed to help you hone your critical and interpretive skills while building a depth of contextual understanding of the periods under study.

Whilst it is not necessary to arrive in Cambridge with copies of these texts (you can borrow copies from the libraries or buy them once you arrive), you may wish to have working copies that you can write in the margins of as you read and re-read over the next few weeks. Try to make notes of thematic and stylistic elements that strike you as significant. As we will be moving through the texts in chronological order, please make sure that the earlier texts are most fresh in your minds when you come up to Cambridge.

Your principal papers during your first year are 'English Literature and its contexts, 1870 to the present', 'English Literature and its contexts, 1660-1870' and 'Shakespeare'. In Michaelmas Term 2017, we will be starting with 'English Literature 1870 to the present'.

It is a good idea to spend some time before your arrival developing your background knowledge of the foundational texts of Western literature: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Homer's *Odyssey* (we recommend Robert Fitzgerald's Vintage Classics translation); and Virgil's *Aeneid* (in the Penguin Classics or Oxford World's Classics editions). You'll find it useful to have some familiarity with the Bible (King James authorised version), particularly Genesis, Exodus, Ecclesiastes, Job, Psalms, Song of Songs, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and Revelation. If you haven't done much early literature before, then reading Dante's *Divine Comedy* (in translations by Robin Kirkpatrick or Clive James) and a few of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* would be useful. Shakespeare figures in all parts of the course, and at the end of Part I we will expect you to have read the majority of the plays and the sonnets, so getting started on reading more of his works is crucial.

Since the terms at Cambridge are short and busy, it is always a good idea to read as many of the long works outside term as you can; it is much easier to write a good essay on a book that you have read more than once. Mark key passages and try to discipline yourself to make notes about a book after reading it, commenting on the things that struck you, perhaps about its plot, characterisation, or symbolic level. Ask yourself what seems to have caught the author's eye, what the themes are, and what you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the book/author. You will be amazed at how effectively such notes will recall the book to you later. Note the date of publication or composition of a work and try to place it in the writer's development and in relation to other contemporary books and relevant historical events. Try to buy editions with introductions and examine the annotation; especially with texts of the 16th–18th centuries, unannotated editions or those with irrelevant annotation will handicap you.

Partly with the examinations in mind, your supervisors will suggest that you look at certain writers and works on a week-by-week basis, but there is no actual syllabus. You have the opportunity to become as immersed in and knowledgeable about each period as you would like. If you find that you enjoy a particular book, read more by that author. If you become

interested in a theme, compare the way in which it is handled by several different authors. Anything you read from a period that you enjoy will enhance your appreciation of the period papers, so if you develop a particular interest in an author, genre, period or style, follow your enthusiasm. Read and absorb as much by (and about) your favourite authors as time permits, and never hesitate to ask us if you would like further suggestions or reading guidance.

Primary texts (read before the beginning of term)

Henry James, *Daisy Miller* (1878) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

George Egerton, *Keynotes and Discords* (1893)

Bram Stoker *Dracula* (1897)

James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914)

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (1954; 2002)

Elizabeth Bowen, 'In the Square', 'The Demon Lover', and 'Mysterious Kôr', from *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (1945)

Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956)

Harold Pinter, 'The Caretaker' (1959) and 'Night School' (1960), from *Harold Pinter: Plays 2* (1996)

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker* (1980)

Shirley Hazzard, *The Transit of Venus* (1980)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)

David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (2004)

Ali Smith, *How to be Both* (2014)

Salman Rushdie, *The Golden House* (2018)

Context and Criticism (read before the beginning of term)

Robert Barnard, *A Short History of English Literature*, 2nd edition (1994)

James Fenton, *An Introduction to English Poetry* (2002)

Marcello Giovanelli and Jessica Mason, *The Language of Literature: An Introduction to Stylistics* (2018)

Michael Levenson, *Modernism* (2011)

Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (2012)

Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1974)

Recommended further reading

M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11th edition (2014)

Robert Alter, and Frank Kermode, eds. *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (1987)

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton Classics Edition (2013)

Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2nd edn (1997)

Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 3rd edn (2009)

Rebecca Beasley, *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound* (2007)

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972)

Terry Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (2006)

Ward Farnsworth, *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric*, reprint edn (2016)

James Fenton, *An Introduction to English Poetry* (2002)

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (1992)

Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?: A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy* (1989)

Peter Rawlings, *American Theorists of the Novel: Henry James, Lionel Trilling and Wayne C. Booth* (2006)

Peter Widdowson, *The Palgrave Guide to English Literature and its Contexts 1500–2000* (2004)

If you have further enquires relating to the commencement of your English studies at Downing, you can contact us via e-mail (english@dow.cam.ac.uk). We look forward to meeting you in October.

