



English Major Reading List 2019 Entry

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to English at NCH

We hope that you will spend a very happy three years exploring literature with us.

Here is a reading list, from which to try to get as much as possible read before Michaelmas term begins.

It can be very hard to get enough reading of literature done during term time, when you will also be occupied by reading criticism, writing essays, attending lectures and tutorials, and doing everything else that students do.

You may well already feel that you have a preference for reading prose, poetry, or drama, or for works of a certain period, but try to hold yourself appreciatively open to everything that is unfamiliar - that is part of the point of doing an English degree.

It always makes sense to familiarise yourself with the basic biographical facts of an author whose work you are reading before you start; try the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (see below) for a brief biography, for example.

Whilst reading, or once you have finished, write up in note form everything you remember: characters' names, plots, and points of interest.

We would like you to buy and use properly-edited hard copy editions of all the literature that you read and write about for your degree, and good copies (eg from Penguin or Oxford World Classics) can be found very cheaply online (for example at Abebooks). If this is for any reason difficult for you at present, however, then you may find these works for free online (for example at Project Gutenberg).

Given that plays and poems can more easily be read during term-time itself than can novels, simply because of their respective lengths, this reading list concentrates on novels.

Happy Reading! If you have any queries about reading, before you arrive in September, feel free to email me on: catherine.brown@nchlondon.ac.uk

Dr. Catherine Brown, Head of, and on behalf of, the English Faculty at NCH

DEFINITELY READ

1. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
2. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
3. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (a novel in verse)

IF POSSIBLE, ALSO READ

- William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*
- Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*
- Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*
- Any novel by Charles Dickens
- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

REFERENCE BOOKS TO BUY, IF POSSIBLE

- An English dictionary. Collins and the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary are both good (you will have access to the full Oxford English Dictionary online once you have started as a student).
- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (Kentucky: Heinle Languages, 2008) ninth (international) edition. Bear in mind that you may need to use the index to locate certain words. For example, there are no entries for 'metaphor' or 'metonymy', but the index indicates that both are under 'figurative language'.
- Culler, J.A., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: 1999). This is the more zesty and idiosyncratic of the two books.
- Birch, Dinah, ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 7th edn (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2009). An excellent reference guide, including short biographies of authors, and plot summaries of major works.

In addition, any of the following would be good investments, in approximate order of importance:

- Makaryk, Irena R. ed., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1993). The best reference companion to literary theory.
- Preminger, Alex, and T.V.F. Brogan, eds, *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, 1993), 611-613. Companions to poetry do not come more hard-core and comprehensive than this one.
- Eagleton, T. *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). Like most of Eagleton's writing, this is vigorous and engaging. It argues for the important of paying close attention to form in reading. It is an accessible introduction to the ideas behind close reading.
- Tambling, J. *What is Literary Language?* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988). This is a basic introduction to literary language and rhetoric, and includes exercises (close readings of poetry) and a glossary. It includes a section on the differences between British and American close reading (from p. 19), and a brief section on Russian formalism (p. 27).
- Walder, D. (ed.) *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) second revised edition. This is an anthology of Anglophone perspectives on literary study from the 1920s, including critics such as T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf, and with more of an emphasis on modernism than postmodernism. It is a useful introduction to theory 'before theory' (i.e. pre-1970s).