

## *Advanced Reading List for Prospective Students of English at University*

The following booklist features some of the principal works in the English language, with a smattering of international works of importance and value. The books are arranged in a roughly chronological sequence, providing a representative sample of the styles and tastes of different periods of English literary history. We recommend that you use this list as a departure point for your reading over the summer and, for Oxbridge candidates, through the autumn preparatory to interview. Try to ensure that you strike a just balance in your reading between genres and periods.

Most of these books can be found in the library; others should be easy to find in second-hand bookstores. A handy purchase might be the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (2 volumes) which cherry-picks from many of the significant writers of the canon. Numerous used copies of this can be found on the internet: check “abebooks.com” This website should be your first port of call for many of the more recent works listed; you can save pounds on the cover price.

<u><i>Anglo-Saxon</i></u>	
<i>Beowulf</i>	Scandinavian dragon-slaying written in Anglo-Saxon verse. Available in various editions, Seamus Heaney’s translation [Faber] is currently the most popular.
<i>The Anglo-Saxon World</i>	Ed. Kevin Crossley-Holland, Oxford World Classics. An anthology of Anglo-Saxon writing, including the important poems “The Wanderer” and “The Seafarer.”
<u><i>Medieval</i></u>	
Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>	Try the <i>Riverside Chaucer</i> edition first; it has handy footnotes and glossaries at the bottom of each page of text. If you have not read Chaucer before, do not be daunted by the odd appearance of the language: if you read it phonetically, you will quickly make sense of it. Perhaps begin with “The Miller’s Tale” or “The Merchant’s Tale.”
Dante Alighieri, <i>The Divine Comedy</i>	Penguin. An Italian masterpiece and cornerstone of western literature, Dante’s great work had enormous influence in England, as elsewhere. Begin with the <i>Inferno</i> , the poet’s description of Hell.
Giovanni Boccaccio, <i>The Decameron</i>	Penguin. Another influential Italian work, this is a collection of 100 stories concerning love, folly, sex and hypocrisy.
Francesco Petrarch, <i>Canzoniere</i>	Carcanet. A third Italian, this time the inventor of the sonnet, and the man who framed the way men write or sing about beautiful women to this day.
English Religious Lyrics.	Norton. A sample of medieval spirituality in verse.
<u><i>Tudor &amp; Elizabethan Poetry</i></u>	

Sir Thomas Wyatt, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Courtier poet from the reign of Henry VIII. Introduced Petrarchan conventions into English.
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, <i>Sonnets</i>	Norton. Another Henrician poet, the first to write sonnets in English.
Edmund Spenser, <i>Amoretti</i>	Norton. The first great poet of modern English. If you like this, take a look at Book I of <i>The Faerie Queene</i> .
Sir Philip Sidney, <i>Astrophel &amp; Stella</i>	Norton. Elizabethan love sonnets <i>par excellence</i> .
<u><i>Tudor &amp; Elizabethan Drama</i></u>	
<i>Everyman</i>	New Mermaid. A Tudor morality play.
Christopher Marlowe, <i>Dr Faustus</i>	Norton. Dynamic study of evil and temptation.
William Shakespeare, <i>Titus Andronicus</i>	Oxford. A Roman bloodbath tragedy.
William Shakespeare, <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Oxford. An early comedy considering the battle between the sexes.
William Shakespeare, <i>Richard III</i>	Penguin. A Machiavellian anti-hero plots his unscrupulous rise to power.
William Shakespeare, <i>Twelfth Night</i>	Penguin. Delightful comedy with melancholic undertone.
William Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i>	Penguin. One of the great tragedies, a psychological study of guilt and revenge.
<u><i>Tudor &amp; Elizabethan Prose</i></u>	
Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i>	Norton. Projections of a perfect political entity: or not?
Niccolò Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>	Penguin. Controversial treatise on political power; widely read—and condemned—throughout the Renaissance.
<u><i>Jacobean Poetry</i></u>	
John Donne, <i>Poems</i>	Penguin. Among the most sophisticated amorous and religious verse in the language. Start with the “Songs and Sonnets” and “Elegies.”
<u><i>Jacobean Drama</i></u>	
William Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i>	Penguin. Harrowing tragedy about wisdom and folly.
William Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i>	Oxford. Mysterious romance involving love and politics, loss and redemption.
John Webster, <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	Norton. Lurid and compelling blood tragedy.
Cyril Tourneur, <i>The Revenger's Tragedy</i>	Penguin. An even more lurid and compelling blood tragedy. Not suitable for your grandmother.
Ben Jonson, <i>Volpone</i>	Norton. A comedy on the theme of hypocrisy and greed.

<u><i>Jacobean Prose</i></u>	
Michel de Montaigne, <i>Essays</i>	Penguin. Important discussions of human affairs.
Francis Bacon, <i>Essays</i>	Norton. Witty philosophical essays on all manner of subjects.
<u><i>Caroline Poetry</i></u>	
Robert Herrick, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Among the most charming and sensuous lyric poetry in the language.
George Herbert, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Perhaps the greatest writer of religious lyric in English.
<u><i>The Commonwealth</i></u>	
John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i>	Penguin. English epic treatment of the Fall of Man; one of the greatest works in the language
John Milton, <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	Longman. The story of Samson retold as a Greek tragedy.
Andrew Marvell, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Polished and sensuous verse on love, religion, politics and society.
<u><i>The Restoration</i></u>	
William Wycherley, <i>The Country Wife</i>	New Mermaid. Ribald farce representative of the liberal age of Charles II.
John Bunyan, <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>	Oxford. Allegorical story of Christian salvation.
John Dryden, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Slick satire on contemporary events: start with "Mac Flecknoe".
Samuel Pepys, <i>Diary</i>	Norton. Worth dipping into for a taste of the period.
<u><i>Eighteenth-Century Prose</i></u>	
Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	Penguin. You've sampled the children's version; now read it in all its glory!
Jonathan Swift, <i>A Modest Proposal</i>	Norton. Straight-faced satire on English savagery towards the Irish.
Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	Norton. Funny and compelling satire.
Samuel Richardson, <i>Pamela</i>	Penguin. Epistolary novel concerning a young maid's moral peril.
Henry Fielding, <i>Joseph Andrews</i>	Penguin. A witty and scatological riposte to <i>Pamela</i> , describing a young man's struggle to protect his honour.
Henry Fielding, <i>Tom Jones</i>	Penguin. A young man's picaresque journey through eighteenth-century England, and his encounters with the nation's grotesques. Not a Welsh singer in sight.
Lawrence Sterne, <i>A Sentimental Journey</i>	Penguin. Experimental narrative centuries ahead of its time.

Oliver Goldsmith, <i>The Vicar of Wakefield</i>	Penguin. Sentimental bitter-sweet novel.
James Boswell, <i>London Journal</i>	McGraw-Hill. A taste of eighteenth-century life.
Samuel Johnson, <i>Rasselas</i>	Norton. An allegorical and philosophical romance.
<u><i>Eighteenth-Century Poetry</i></u>	
Alexander Pope, <i>The Rape of the Lock</i>	Norton. Mock-heroic poem with satirical and erotic themes.
Alexander Pope, <i>The Essay on Man</i>	Norton. Philosophical poem of the Enlightenment.
Christopher Smart, <i>Jubilate Agno</i>	Norton. What happens when a madman looks at his cat for too long.
James Thomson, <i>The Seasons</i>	Norton. Very widely read poems on the beauty of nature. Key text in the poetry of Sensibility.
Thomas Gray, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Look out especially for “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.”
Oliver Goldsmith, <i>The Deserted Village</i>	Norton. Polemical poem lamenting the effects of industrialization upon society.
<u><i>Eighteenth-Century Drama</i></u>	
Richard Sheridan, <i>The School for Scandal</i>	New Mermaid. Witty comedy of manners.
<u><i>Regency Prose</i></u>	
Jane Austen, <i>Sense &amp; Sensibility</i>	Oxford. Genius
Jane Austen, <i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i>	Oxford. Pure genius.
Jane Austen, <i>Emma</i>	Oxford. Pure genius.
Jane Austen, <i>Persuasion</i>	Oxford. Mature genius.
<u><i>Romanticism</i></u>	
William Wordsworth, <i>Poems</i>	Penguin. One of the poetic masters of the language. Highlights are his earlier poems, and his great verse narrative of his formative years, <i>The Prelude</i> .
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Begin with “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan.”
John Keats, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. Few poets in the language write with greater beauty or pathos.
Percy Bysshe Shelley, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. A poet of power and passion.
William Blake, <i>Poems</i>	Oxford. Part genius, part madman, try <i>Songs of Innocence and Experience</i> . Leave <i>Jerusalem, Emanation of the Giant Albion</i> for the time being.

Robert Burns, <i>Poems</i>	Penguin. Lowland Scots farmer writes of love and life in his native dialect.
Thomas De Quincy, <i>Confessions of An English Opium Eater</i>	Penguin. Compelling and moving account of addiction to the crack-cocaine of its day.
Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>	Penguin. Gothic horror in a German castle. And the Orkneys.
<u><i>Victorian Poetry</i></u>	
Alfred Tennyson, <i>Poems</i>	Everyman. Read “Morte D’Arthur” for a flavour of medieval revival poetry. Also see his “Charge of the Light Brigade” for a lesson in metrical control.
Robert Browning, <i>Poems</i>	Everyman. Challenging and often obscure poet, with a developed sense of dramatic monologue. Try “My Last Duchess.”
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, <i>Sonnets</i>	Norton. More than the “her indoors” of the above, EBB was a finer poet than her husband. Read through her translations of Portuguese verse.
Christina Rossetti, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. The finest religious poetry of the period.
Edgar Allan Poe, <i>Poems</i>	Penguin. Horror and the Gothic from this macabre American.
<u><i>Victorian Novels</i></u>	
Charles Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i>	Penguin. Forget the dance routines and enjoy Dickens’s caustic sarcasm.
Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i>	Penguin. An immensely satisfying and life-affirming read.
Emily Bronte, <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Penguin. Novels do not come more passionate than this: bordering on the hysterical at times.
Charlotte Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i>	Penguin. One of the finest love stories in the language with strong passions throughout.
Anthony Trollope, <i>Barchester Towers</i>	Penguin. High drama and jealousy in a cathedral close, with some wonderfully grotesque characters.
Gustave Flaubert, <i>Madame Bovary</i>	Penguin. Simply a masterpiece.
George Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i>	Penguin. The apogee of the Victorian novel: a vast and complex tale of social interactions within a single community.
George Eliot, <i>Silas Marner</i>	Penguin. A touching story of the power of human warmth.
Hermann Melville, <i>Moby Dick</i>	Penguin. Whale-sized account of one man’s pursuit of a white cetacean. Will you blubber at the end?
Ivan Turgenev, <i>Spring Torrents</i>	Penguin. Moving story about a young Russian’s experiences of love and temptation.
Fyodor Dostoevsky, <i>Crime &amp; Punishment</i>	Penguin. One of the greatest novels ever written.
Thomas Hardy, <i>Tess of the D’Urbervilles</i>	Penguin. Powerful story of a simple country girl’s experiences at the hands of two very different men.

Thomas Hardy, <i>Jude the Obscure</i>	Penguin. A salutary tale about what happens when you become over-familiar with barmaids. Actually, a harrowing masterpiece.
Thomas Hardy, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>	Penguin. If you missed this at GCSE, make up for lost time. Quite brilliant.
Henry James, <i>What Maisie Knew</i>	Penguin. Witty view of marriage and relationships from a child's perspective.
<u><i>Nineteenth-Century Drama</i></u>	
Oscar Wilde, <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	Penguin. Scintillating social comedy.
Henrik Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i>	Oxford. Controversial drama lifting the lid on the realities of marriage.
August Strindberg, <i>The Father</i>	Penguin. A respectable man loses his peace of mind by reading scientific theories.
<u><i>Early Twentieth-Century Prose</i></u>	
James Joyce, <i>Dubliners</i>	Penguin. Fifteen short stories of genius.
James Joyce, <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>	Penguin. An account of Joyce's childhood and youth, with brilliantly vivid descriptive passages.
D.H. Lawrence, <i>Sons &amp; Lovers</i>	Penguin. A young man's intense relationship with his mother—and local girls.
E.M. Forster, <i>A Passage to India</i>	Penguin. Unflinching examination of the crisis of faith set against a colonial context.
E.M. Forster, <i>A Room With A View</i>	Penguin. English society encounters Italian passion.
<u><i>Modernism, World War I, &amp; the Inter-War Years</i></u>	
James Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i>	Penguin. Challenging monument of Modernism without compare.
T.S. Eliot, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. Begin with "The Waste Land", "The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock" and "Four Quartets".
Ezra Pound, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. Intellectual modernism.
Virginia Woolf, <i>To the Lighthouse</i>	Penguin. Experiments in narrative form.
Virginia Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i>	Penguin. A riposte to the male-dominated literary world.
Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>	Penguin. A terrifying study of civilized behaviour and human exploitation.
W.B. Yeats, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. The foremost poet of Ireland experimenting with form and imagery.
Wilfred Owen, <i>Poems</i>	Norton. The closest many of us will come to the horrors of front-line action.
Robert Graves, <i>Goodbye To All That</i>	Penguin. A Wimbledon man's wartime experiences.
Evelyn Waugh, <i>Brideshead Revisited</i>	Penguin. The challenge to faith of the modern era.

Christopher Isherwood, <i>Goodbye to Berlin</i>	Vintage. The rise of Nazism glimpsed through nightclub life in 1930s Berlin.
Graham Greene, <i>Brighton Rock</i>	Penguin. Provincial gangster meets an innocent girl—and his insistent Catholic conscience.
W.H. Auden, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. Politics, society, personal relationships examined in thoughtful and opaque poems.
Louis MacNeice, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. The poetry of a man of the world; by turns, urbane, angry, passionate and analytical.
<u><i>World War II and Post-War Literature</i></u>	
Keith Douglas, <i>Poems</i>	Oxford. Philosophical reflections on killing and destruction.
George Orwell, <i>1984</i>	Penguin. The greatest dystopia in the language.
George Orwell, <i>Animal Farm</i>	Penguin. Totalitarianism on a farm in this disturbing beast fable.
Hermann Hesse, <i>Strange News from Another Star</i>	Penguin. Modern fables with a transcendental undertone.
Primo Levi, <i>If This Is A Man</i>	Abacus. An Auschwitz memoir.
John Osborne, <i>Look Back in Anger</i>	Faber. Angry Young Man in Kitchen Sink Drama. You may enjoy his tirades.
Arthur Miller, <i>The Crucible</i>	Penguin. 1950s America scrutinized through an historical fable.
Arthur Miller, <i>All My Sons</i>	Penguin. The American Dream dissected.
Tennessee Williams, <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	Penguin. Powerful play set in New Orleans with themes of deception, aggression, passion and vanity.
Samuel Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>	Faber. Two men under a tree: what could possibly happen?
Harold Pinter, <i>The Caretaker</i>	Methuen. Claustrophobia and inertia.
Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Lolita</i>	Penguin. One man's obsession for an under-age girl. But who is the naïve party?
William Golding, <i>Lord of the Flies</i>	Faber. Take away the structure of society, and hark what discord follows.
Kingsley Amis, <i>Lucky Jim</i>	Penguin. The disreputable adventures of a picaresque history teacher.
J.D. Salinger, <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	J.D. Salinger, <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>
Brian Moore, <i>The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne</i>	Panther. Isolation and social dislocation of modern life.
Philip Larkin, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. Funny, cruel, brilliantly observed poetry: never insipid.
<u><i>Contemporary Literature: 1960s to Present Day</i></u>	
John Fowles, <i>The French Lieutenant's Woman</i>	Vintage. Postmodern narrative as historical novel.

Tom Stoppard, <i>Rosencrantz &amp; Guildenstern are Dead</i>	Faber. Uneasy comedy with extraordinary flights of linguistic fancy.
John Updike, <i>Rabbit Omnibus</i>	Penguin. Four novels about hope and despair in the suburbs.
Joe Orton, <i>Loot</i>	Methuen. Macabre, black farce poking fun at the taboos surrounding death.
Iris Murdoch, <i>The Sea, The Sea</i>	Penguin. Young love remembered.
Toni Morrison, <i>Song of Solomon</i>	Picador. Family drama set in the context of racial prejudice in twentieth-century America.
Mervyn Peake, <i>Gormenghast</i>	Penguin. Contemporary Gothic.
Gabriel García Márquez, <i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i>	Penguin. Celebrated Colombian author's examination of human love.
Salman Rushdie, <i>The Satanic Verses</i>	Picador. A rollicking fable about good, evil, metamorphoses, dreams and two men caught between England, Mecca and the Indian Subcontinent.
Isabel Allende, <i>The Stories of Eva Luna</i>	Penguin. Powerful and moving tales from the Chilean magic-realist.
Brian Friel, <i>Translations</i>	Faber. A play examining the borders of language and power.
Philip Roth, <i>The Human Stain</i>	Vintage. Political correctness under scrutiny.
Seamus Heaney, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. The greatest living poet in the language.
Ted Hughes, <i>Poems</i>	Faber. English poet with an unsentimental view of the natural world. Start with his <i>Tales from Ovid</i> .
R.S. Thomas, <i>Poems</i>	Bloodaxe. Grumpy Welsh clergyman, but transcendent religious poet.
Tom Wolfe, <i>The Bonfire of the Vanities</i>	Picador. Capitalism on the rocks.
Martin Amis, <i>London Fields</i>	Picador. Low life brought to life.
Graham Swift, <i>Waterland, Last Orders</i>	Picador. Personal history and world events.