

Section 2 - Connect with your University



Reading List – English Literature

If you are planning on studying English Literature at University, the following list gives you some suggestions for broadening your reading experience in preparation for studying Literature at Undergraduate level. You may want to just dip in and out of the critical reading texts in order to better understand more advanced ways to approach literary texts. The 'Texts Across Time' section tries to draw in prose, poetry and drama texts written over a vast range of historical periods. Your university may well be able to provide you with a more definitive reading list of texts for your course.

Most importantly, remember that reading should enable you to show your passion for literature! If you are planning on doing preparatory reading, a good place to start is with writers or particular genres of texts which you enjoy.

Critical Reading

Tory Young, *Studying English Literature: A Practical Guide*, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Terry Eagleton, *How to Read Literature*, Yale University Press, 2013

Texts Across Time

***Beowulf* (c. 700-1000) – Anonymous:** This epic poem was originally written in Old English (a language which you may have the option to study as part of your university course) but Seamus Heaney has written an up-to-date translation.

***The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387-1400) – Geoffrey Chaucer:** A collection of stories in verse told by a fictional group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury Cathedral – you can dip in and out of as many or as few as you like.

***A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595-6) – William Shakespeare:** Shakespeare is a must-read for any English student. After studying tragedy at A Level, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides a good introduction to the genre of Shakespeare's comedies.

***Emma* (1815) – Jane Austen:** Though *Emma* is less famous than *Pride and Prejudice*, many critics believe it's Jane Austen's best work - a perfect starting point for anyone looking to read Jane Austen for the first time.

***Mary Barton* (1848) – Elizabeth Gaskell:** A Victorian novel with a huge social conscience, which confronts the reader with the challenges faced by the working classes of nineteenth-century industrial Manchester.

***A Doll's House (1879)* – Henrik Ibsen:** Ibsen was a Norwegian playwright whose works caused a stir across Europe. Though not all English courses require you to study literature in translation, it can be good to show that you have an appreciation of it nevertheless.

***Selected Poems (c. 1917-8)* – Wilfred Owen:** Owen is considered by many critics to be the greatest poet of the First World War. If you're not sure where to begin, some of his best-regarded poems include 'Disabled', 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'.

***The World's Wife (1999)* – Carol Ann Duffy:** Sometimes sad, sometimes funny, and always highly readable, this poetry collection plays with our preconceptions of famous women from literature.

***The Kite Runner (2003)* – Khaled Hosseini:** A good example of postcolonial literature; Hosseini's novel deals with the devastating legacy left by empire.