

Prelims Paper 3: Literature in English (1830–1910)

MICHAELMAS 2018

Advance Reading

This list is provided to guide your preparatory reading for the Victorian paper. There will be plenty to do and to delight in during your first term at Oxford, so read as much as you can before you arrive. Take notes as you read: these will serve as invaluable reminders for things such as themes, character names and major plot points, as well as a record of your own critical responses to a text. Be sure to mark passages that are of particular interest too, so that you can return to them easily.

It is important to use authoritative editions from now on. Oxford World's Classics, Penguin Classics, and Norton Critical Editions are all widely available, including from second-hand sellers. Please make sure you have a hard copy that you can bring with you to classes and tutorials.

Novels

(We will most likely focus on the starred items)

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853)*

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *Bleak House* (1853)*

George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859), *Middlemarch* (1872)*

Thomas Hardy, *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* (1892), *Jude the Obscure* (1895)

Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881)*

Herman Melville, *Redburn: His First Voyage* (1849)*

Poetry

Pick up a good anthology of Victorian poetry – I would recommend *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, edited by Christopher Ricks. The Blackwell Annotated Anthology provides further details about the poets and poems it includes. We are likely to touch on poetry by the following writers at some point, but read as widely as you can:

Matthew Arnold, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Emily Dickinson (see the Faber *Complete Poems*), Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Rudyard Kipling, George Meredith, William Morris, Edgar Allan Poe, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Arthur Symonds, Alfred Tennyson, Walt Whitman (specifically *Leaves of Grass*)

Plays

Our studies of theatre and performance in the period will be wide-ranging. If you would like to read ahead, I would suggest focusing on plays by W.S. Gilbert, Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. I would also highly recommend a collection of plays published by Oxford entitled *The New Woman and Other Emancipated Woman Plays*, which is edited by Jean Chothia.

Nonfiction Prose

Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869)
Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839)
John Ruskin, *Selected Writings* (Oxford)
William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (Penguin)
George Eliot, *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings* (Penguin)
Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873)

Useful Background Reading

You may find it informative to explore the following resources, which provide good introductions to the social and historical contexts of the period, as well as its literature and culture:

Colin Matthew and Christopher Harvie, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000)
Sean Purchase, *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature* (Palgrave, 2006)
Josephine Guy and Ian Small, *The Routledge Concise History of Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Routledge, 2011)

The British Library has an excellent set of resources devoted to Romantic and Victorian literature: <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles>. Spend some time exploring the articles on nineteenth-century writing: they are all written by experts in the period and raise important and interesting ideas and issues you may wish to carry forward. You may also wish to explore the resources online at www.victorianweb.org.

Finally, you may find it helpful to consult general introductions to literary forms: the novel, poetry, drama. These will be instructive beyond your studies in this period. Here are some useful examples:

James Wood, *How Fiction Works* (London: Vintage, 2009)
James Fenton, *An Introduction to English Poetry* (London: Penguin, 2003)
Terry Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)
Martin Meisel, *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Eleanor Lybeck
Departmental Lecturer in English

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