

Keble College  
Oxford  
OX1 3PG

4<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Student,

We are very much looking forward to seeing you in October. In your first year at Keble you'll take two papers from the English side:

- Paper 1: An Introduction to English Language and Literature  
and
- EITHER Paper 3 (Nineteenth-Century Literature) OR Paper 4 (Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Literature) – You can choose which of these you'd rather study.

Below you'll find summer reading for Paper 1, and also some suggestions for reading for nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors. Once you've decided which century you'd like to focus on, you should just read the relevant authors below.

Oxford terms are short and very busy so it's vital that you **read and prepare as much as possible before term starts**. Cheap second-hand copies of many titles are available from [abebooks.co.uk](http://abebooks.co.uk) or from [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk).

Your French tutor (Dr Michael Hawcroft) will be able to advise you on your reading for the French side.

### **Paper 1: An Introduction to English Language and Literature**

Thoughtful study of the following works is highly recommended (asterisks indicate *very* highly recommended titles). You should try to read at least 2 of the books from each section below. Theoretical perspectives:

- Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (2016) \* – A KEY TEXT – full provocative, short chapters on a whole range of topics (on the author, the uncanny, laughter, the tragic, character, voice, figures and tropes, ghosts, animals, the text and the world, secrets, pleasure, desire, beginnings and endings, sexual difference, and much more.) A careful reading of this book will stand you in very good stead.
- Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2011) – a great introduction \*

Some excellent books on poetry:

- James Longenbach, *How Poems Get Made* (2018) \* – KEY TEXT. Other highly recommended texts include *The Resistance to Poetry* (2004) and *The Virtues of Poetry* (2013)
- Christopher Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (1986) \* – a collection of essays on different poets, so no need to read in chronological order; for starters, you might try the essays on Wordsworth, Housman, Larkin, Johnson, and Stevie Smith.
- Kay Ryan, *Synthesizing Gravity: Selected Prose* (2020) \* – a wonderful selection of essays on poetry by a great poet-critic.

And three excellent books on fiction:

- James Wood, *How Fiction Works* (2008) \*
- David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (1994)
- Peter Boxall, *The Value of the Novel* (2015) \*

Although you won't be working directly on the Language side of Paper 1 in your first term's tutorials and classes, you might also read these 2 books over the summer:

- Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*, 4th ed. (2000)
- David Crystal, *The English Language*, 2nd ed. (2002)

### **Papers 3 & 4 – Prose Fiction**

The following underlined texts, around which our sessions will be based, must be read before the start of Michaelmas term. Suggestions for additional reading follow each set text, but these are not obligatory; rather, they should be treated as guides for further exploration. A complete syllabus will be provided at the beginning of term.

- Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Tales* (1833-1845). The Oxford University Press World's Classics edition is best, but if you're not able to procure it, please ensure that you read the following stories: 'The Masque of the Red Death,' 'The Man of the Crowd,' 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' and 'The Black Cat.' After gaining some familiarity with Poe's stories, you might take a look at the non-fiction, such as his 'Review of *Twice-Told Tales*' and the essay 'Philosophy of Composition.' Poe's poems might also be of interest, particularly: 'The Raven,' 'Dream-Land,' 'Ulalume: A Ballad,' 'Annabel Lee,' and 'The Bells.'
- Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41). After you've tackled this, you might consider reading *Great Expectations* or *David Copperfield*, particularly if the *Bildungsroman* genre sparks your interest. *Sketches by Boz* (1833-1836) is also noteworthy, as it sheds light on Victorian life in the metropolis. You do not have to read *Sketches* in full, but it would be helpful to familiarise yourself with it.
- Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (1853). For background reading, you might consult Brontë's letters, her drawings and watercolour paintings, and her juvenilia. For the latter, see *Tales of Glass Town, Angria, and Gondal* in the the Oxford

World's Classics edition. You are also encouraged to read her sister Emily Brontë's poetry as preparation, much of which can be found online.

- Henry James, *Daisy Miller* (1878). If James' depictions of childhood and youth interest you, try *What Maisie Knew* (1897) or 'Turn of the Screw' (1898). Other stories and novellas of note include: 'The Aspern Papers,' 'The Jolly Corner,' and 'The Beast in the Jungle,' as well as his classic essay 'The Art of Fiction.' James' travel sketches, such as those found in *English Hours* and *Italian Hours*, also make for good preparatory reading. If you're keen to explore the syntactically adventurous late work, try either *The Wings of the Dove* or *The Ambassadors*.
- James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914) and the first six episodes of *Ulysses* (1922) (up to and including 'Hades'). In *Dubliners*, please pay special attention to 'Eveline,' 'Araby,' 'A Painful Case,' and 'A Little Cloud.' If you wish to range farther afield, seek out Joyce's collection of poetry, *Chamber Music* or try your hand at the notoriously difficult *Finnegans Wake*, particularly the 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' section. Happily, there are recordings of Joyce reading the latter online.
- Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (1925), which you can find in either *The Collected Stories* (Everyman's Library) or in the Scribner edition. (It is also available in the British Arrow edition of *Snows of Kilimanjaro* from 'On the Quai at Smyrna' onwards.) Please also read Tim O'Brien's story 'The Things They Carried' in his short story collection of the same name (1990). Once you've read the Hemingway and O'Brien, you might try a range of other authors on conflict and war, including: Ambrose Bierce, Rose Macaulay, Evelyn Waugh, Martha Gellhorn, C.L.R. James, Graham Greene, Christopher Isherwood, Mary McCarthy, Yusef Komunyakaa, Tim O'Brien, Michael Herr, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Edwidge Dandicat, Bảo Ninh, and Nico Walker.
  - For an intriguing long-form investigation into a case of desertion in the U.S. War in Afghanistan, see the second season of the podcast *Serial*.
- Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (1933). Please also read Woolf's essay 'The Death of the Moth' (1942), as well as Annie Dillard's 'The Death of the Moth', published in *Harper's* (1976). A helpful contextual piece is John Berger's 'Why Look at Animals?' (1977), a pdf of which is available online. (Don't fret if you can't find it; a scan will be provided in Michaelmas.) For more writing on animals, ranging from realist to nonsense to non-fiction, see: Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Jack London's *Call of the Wild*, John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, and Eileen Myles' *Afterglow: A Dog Memoir*.
- James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956). See also Baldwin's short stories, such as 'Sonny's Blues', and essay collections like *Notes of a Native Son* and *The Fire Next Time*. You might also want to seek out other Black American authors of the early- to mid-twentieth century, such as Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, and Richard Wright, as well as of the contemporary moment, such as Toni Morrison, Claudia Rankine, and Ta-Nehisi Coates. For theory and criticism of the Black diaspora, see Aimé Césaire, C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Sylvia Wynter, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy.

- The *LRB* podcast also has an excellent interview with Jesse McCarthy called ‘Blind Spots’ (28 April 2021).
- Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963). Plath’s poems, such as those found in *Ariel* (1965, posthumously) and *The Colossus* (1960), will make for useful background reading. You might also consult the two-volume *Letters of Sylvia Plath*, edited by Peter K. Steinberg and Karen V. Kukil, as well as *The Journals of Sylvia Plath: 1950-1962*, edited by Kukil. The most recent biography is Heather Clark’s *Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath*.

***Please also read the following short stories:***

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, ‘Wakefield’ in *New England Magazine* (May 1835)
- Sherwood Anderson, ‘Book of Grotesques’, ‘Hands’, ‘Paper Pills,’ and ‘Adventure’ in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919)
- Zora Neale Hurston, ‘The Gilded Six-Bits’ in *Story* (1933)
- Carson McCullers, ‘A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud’ in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1951)
- Ottessa Moshfegh, ‘Slumming’ in *The Paris Review* (2014); also found in *Homesick for Another World* (2017)
- George Saunders, ‘Adams’ in *The New Yorker* (2004); also in *In Persuasion Nation* (2006)
  - The New Yorker Fiction podcast features Joshua Ferris reading and discussing Saunders’ story (episode dated 10 Aug. 2009).

N.B. Most of these stories are available online, if no hard-copy can be found ahead of Michaelmas.

There will be room in the classes and tutorials to pursue your enthusiasms, so I suggest reading as widely as possible across the period (1830 to the present) during the summer. In addition to the core texts above, you might explore some of the following authors: Thomas Hardy, Lewis Carroll, H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Muriel Spark, Chinua Achebe, and Zadie Smith. I am very happy to accommodate essay topics on North American authors, including: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Edith Wharton, Jean Toomer, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Edward Albee, Claudia Rankine, Elizabeth Smart, Alice Munro, and Anne Carson.

Before the course begins, it is important to familiarise yourself the broader preoccupations of the Victorians and Modernists, as well as to get a basic handle on narrative theory. Here are a few recommendations for further reading:

Studies of the Victorian/Modern periods:

- Philip Davis, *The Victorians 1830-1880* (2004)
- Chris Baldick, *The Modern Movement* (2005)
- Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms* (1995)
- Peter Brooker (ed.), *Modernism/Postmodernism* (1992)

Books on fiction:

- James Wood, *How Fiction Works* (2008), especially the chapters ‘Narrating’, ‘Detail’, and ‘Character’.
- Ian Watt, ‘Realism and the Novel Form’ in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957)
- Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (2004)

More focused studies:

- Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (1992)
- Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2017)
- Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961)
- Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (1992)

### **And, looking beyond your first term . . .**

In your second term at Oxford you will be studying Poetry and Poetics from 1830 to the present. If you have time over the summer, anthologies are a very good place to start. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, 2 volumes, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2003) [especially volume 1], is a good place to start. You might sample bits and pieces of the following poets (see also the ‘Poetics’ section at the back of both volumes):

- Alfred Tennyson
- Robert Browning
- Walt Whitman
- Emily Dickinson
- Christina G. Rossetti
- Gerard Manley Hopkins
- Thomas Hardy
- Charlotte Mew
- Robert Frost
- Edward Thomas
- D. H. Lawrence
- T. S. Eliot
- Ezra Pound
- W. B. Yeats
- Langston Hughes
- Gertrude Stein
- William Carlos Williams
- Wallace Stevens
- Marianne Moore
- W. H. Auden
- Elizabeth Bishop
- Lorine Niedecker
- Gwendolyn Brooks
- Audre Lorde
- Philip Larkin
- Stevie Smith
- Sylvia Plath

- Frank O'Hara
- James Schuyler
- Lucille Clifton
- Carl Phillips
- Thom Gunn
- A. R. Ammons
- John Ashbery
- Derek Walcott
- Seamus Heaney
- Claudia Rankine
- Kay Ryan

Other anthologies you might explore:

- *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song*, ed. Kevin Young
- *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, ed. Christopher Ricks
- *Penguin Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, ed. Rita Dove
- *Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry*, ed. Keith Tuma

The Keble English Team  
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