Suggested Readings for the Comprehensive Exam of the English Department of the University of the South

Given the limited time we have with our majors, we must acknowledge that the readings they undertake in the English curriculum are only a stone’s skip across a wide and rich expanse of literary waters. The following list is likewise not a comprehensive list of literary touchstones, but it is intended as a guide as you follow your own intellectual interests and curiosities. We expect that in your courses you’ll read substantially but not exhaustively from the works listed here, and that you’ll also read a number of works that do not appear on the list. Let your preparation for the comprehensive exam be an occasion to revisit the novels, poems, and plays that you’ve read closely in your classes as well as an opportunity to extend your independent explorations of the literary canon. Your professors recommend this guide as a useful map for you in these explorations, both while you are in Sewanee and in the years to follow.

Students are encouraged to purchase The Norton Anthology of English Literature (2 volumes) and The Norton Anthology of American Literature and to familiarize themselves with their contents. These anthologies include a generous sampling of the works mentioned below, and they contain introductions to different literary periods and movements can help you refine your sense of periods and connections. Recommended histories of English literature includes Albert C. Baugh’s A Literary History of England[1] A useful popular history is available in a Norton paperback edition: The Land and Literature of England, by Robert M. Adams. An excellent History of the English Language was written by Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable. The Columbia Literary History of the United States, ed. Emory Elliot, is standard. Marcus Cunliffe’s Literature of the United States is short, perceptive, and readable. Other useful books are A Handbook to Literature by William Harmon and Hugh Holman and The Oxford Companion to English Literature by Margaret Drabble.

Background
Aeschylus, The Oresteia
Apuleius, The Golden Ass
Aristotle, Poetics
Augustine, Confessions
The Bible, especially Genesis, Ecclesiastes, Job, The Psalms, Song of Solomon, and the Gospels (The King James Authorized Version), select stories from the Apocrypha
Boccaccio, Decameron
Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy
Dante, The Divine Comedy
Homer, The Iliad and The Odyssey
Horace, Ars Poetica
Lucretius, On the Nature of Things
Ovid, The Metamorphoses
Petrarch, Rime Sparse, 23, 90, 133, and 190
Plato, Apology, Symposium, The Republic
Sophocles, Oedipus Rex and Antigone
Vergil, The Aeneid
I. Medieval Literature

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (selections)
Bede, Ecclesiastical History (selections, including “Caedmon’s Hymn”)
Exeter Book (Riddles)
Wulf and Eadacer
Beowulf
Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, The Canterbury Tales, Parliament of Fowls
The Cloud of Unknowing
The Golden Legend (selections)
John Gower, Confessio Amantis, Vox Clamantis (selections)
Henryson, Morill Fabills
Hoccleve, Selected Poems
William Langland, Piers Plowman (A-text)
Julian of Norwich, Norton selections from The Showings of Divine Love
Margery Kempe, Norton selections from The Book of Margery Kempe
John Lydgate, Siege of Thebes, selected short poems and drama
Mandeville, Mandeville’s Travels
Marie de France, Lais (selections)
Alliterative and Stanziac Mort D’Arthur (selections)
Pearl
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Selected Plays from the York Mystery Cycle
Sir Gowther
Sir Orfeo
The King of Tars
The Wakefield Second Shepherds Play
Everyman
Mankind

II. Renaissance Literature

Burton, Norton selections from The Anatomy of Melancholy
Campion, “My Sweetest Lesbia,” “There is a Garden in her Face”
Carew, “Elegy,” “A Rapture”
Cavendish, Norton selections from The Blazing World
Crashaw, “The Weeper,” “The Flaming Heart”
Drayton, “Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part”
Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy
Lanyer, “The Description of Cooke-ham”
Lovelace, “To Althea From Prison,” “The Grasshopper,” “To Lucasta, Going To the Wars”
Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, Tamburlaine Parts 1 & 2, “The Passionate Shepherd to his Love,” Hero and Leander, All Ovids Elegies 1.5
More, Utopia
Nashe, Pierce Penniless, His Supplication to the Devil
Raleigh, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd”
Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, Astrophil and Stella
Spenser, The Shepheardes Calendar (January, April, October, November, December), The Faerie Queene (I, II, III), Amoretti, “Epithalamion”
Vaughan, “Regeneration,” “The Retreat,” “They Are All Gone Into That World of Light,” “The World,” “Unprofitableness,” “The Waterfall”
Webster, The Duchess of Malfi
Wroth, Pamphilia to Amphilanthus
Wyatt, “Whoso List to Hunt,” “They Flee from Me,” “Unstable Dream, According to the Place,” “My Lute, Awake!”
### III. Shakespeare

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<tr>
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<td><em>The Merchant of Venice</em></td>
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<td><em>The Tempest</em></td>
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<td><em>Troilus and Cressida</em></td>
<td><em>Twelfth Night</em></td>
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<td><em>The Winter’s Tale</em></td>
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### IV. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature

Addison and Steele, Norton selections from *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*

Behn, “The Disappointment,” *The Rover, Oroonoko*

Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Marriage of Heaven & Hell*


Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*

Burns, “To a Mouse,” “Epistle to John Lapraik,” “To a Louse,” “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” “A Red, Red Rose,” *Tam O’Shanter*

Collins, “Ode to Evening,” “Ode to Fear,” “Ode on the Poetical Character”

Congreve, *The Way of the World*

Defoe, *Moll Flanders*

Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Mac Flecknoe, Absalom and Achitophel, To the Memory of Mr. Oldham*”

Etherege, *The Man of Mode*

Fielding, *Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones*

Finch, “A Nocturnal Reverie”

Gay, *Beggar’s Opera*

Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer, The Deserted Village*


Pepys, Norton selections from the *Diary*


Richardson, *Pamela, Clarissa*


Sheridan, *The Rivals*

Sterne, *Tristram Shandy, A Sentimental Journey*

Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*
Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*
Wychterley, *The Country Wife*

**V. Nineteenth-Century British Literature**
Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*
Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess,” “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,” “Childe Roland,” “The Bishop Orders His Tomb,” “Fra Lippo Lippi,” “Andrea del Sarto,” “Cleon,” “Caliban Upon Setebos; or Natural Theology in the Island,” “Porphyria’s Lover,” “Love Among the Ruins”
Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (III), *Don Juan* (I), “Prometheus,” “She Walks in Beauty,”
Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*
Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
Carlyle, “Characteristics,” “Signs of the Times,” Selections from *Sartor Resartus*
Clare, “The Snipe,” “The Flitting,” “I Am,” “An Invite to Eternity”
Dickens, *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *David Copperfield*
Eliot, George, *Middlemarch*
Fitzgerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*
Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, “Hap,” “Neutral Tones,” “The Darkling Thrush,” “In a Wood”
Housman, “To An Athlete Dying Young,” “Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff,” “Oh, Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now,” “On Wenlock Edge”
Newman, Selections from *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* and *The Idea of a University*
Pater, Conclusion to *The Renaissance*
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “The Blessed Damozel,” “Jenny,” *Sonnets and Songs, Towards a Work to be Called “The House of Life”*
Ruskin, Selections from *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*
Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Ivanhoe*
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Treasure Island
Thackeray, Vanity Fair
Trollope, Barchester Towers
Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, “The Decay of Lying,” “The Critic as Artist”

VI. American Literature through the Nineteenth Century
Bradford, Of Plimouth Plantation (anthologized excerpts)
Bradstreet, “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” “A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment,” “Contemplations,” “Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666.”
Chesnutt, The Conjure Woman
Cooper, Last of the Mohicans
Dickinson, “After great pain, a formal feeling comes--” “Because I could not stop for Death,” “A Route of Evanescence,” “Title Divine--is mine!”, “‘There's a certain Slant of light,” “One need not be a Chamber--to be Haunted--”, “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” “The Souls selects her own Society,” “Much Madness is divinest Sense,” “Essential Oils--are wrung--” “I dwell in Possibility” “‘My Life had stood--a Loaded Gun,” “Tell the Truth but tell it slant,” “Renunciation--is a piercing Virtue--”
Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Edwards, Personal Narrative, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
Franklin, Autobiography
Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”
Irving, “Rip van Winkle,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”
Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
James, “The Beast in the Jungle,” The Bostonians, The Turn of the Screw, The Portrait of a Lady
Melville, “Benito Cereno,” Moby-Dick, Piazza Tales, “Bartleby, the Scrivener”
Rowlandson, A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson
Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin
Thoreau, *Walden*, “Civil Disobedience”  
Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*  
Wheatley, “On Being Brought From Africa to America,” “To Maccenas”  
Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”

**VII. Modern and Contemporary American Literature**

**Verse**

Berry, *Sabbaths, Leavings*  
Bishop, “The Fish,” “Sestina,” “In the Waiting Room,” “The Moose,” “Miracle for Breakfast,” “Casablanca”  
Bowers, selections  
Brooks, “a song in the front yard,” “Sadie and Maud,” “We Real Cool”  
Crane, *The Bridge*  
cummings, “in Just-,” “the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls,” “i sing of Olaf glad and big”  
Gunn, “My Sad Captains,” “Still Life,” “The Missing”  
Hayden, “Middle Passage,” “O Daedalus, Fly Away Home,” “Frederick Douglass,” “Those Winter Sundays”  
Jennings, selections  
Justice, “Psalm and Lament,” “Villanelle at Sundown,” “Thinking about the Past,” “Counting the Mad,” “Nostalgia of the Lakefronts”  
Lowell, “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket,” “After the Surprising Conversions,” “Memories of West Street and Lepke,” “Skunk Hour,” “For the Union Dead,” “Waking Early Sunday Morning”  
Nemerov, “The Goose Fish,” “The Blue Swallows,” “The Human Condition,” “The Loon’s Cry,” “The View from an Attic Window,” “Figures of Thought,” “Painting a Mountain Stream,” “Holding the Mirror up to Nature”  
Ransom, “Bells for John Whiteside’s Daughter,” “Captain Carpenter,” “Piazza Piece,” “Antique Harvesters”  
Roethke, “My Papa’s Waltz,” “The Waking,” “I Knew a Woman,” “In a Dark Time”  
Stevens, “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” “Sunday Morning,” “The Snow Man,” “A High-Toned Old Christian Woman,” “The Emperor of Ice Cream,” “The Idea of Order at Key West”  
Tate, “Ode to the Confederate Dead”
Van Duyn, “Leda,” “Letters from a Father,” “The Vision Test,” “Falling in Love at Sixty-Five”
Wilbur, “Praise in Summer,” “Year’s End,” “Tywater,” “The Undead,” “Cottage Street, 1953,” “Love Calls Us to the Things of this World”
Williams, “Tract,” “Queen Anne’s Lace,” “Spring and All,” “The Red Wheelbarrow,” “Yachts,” “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus”

**Fiction**

Agee, *Death in the Family*
Bellow, *Seize the Day*
Cather, *The Song of the Lark*
Chopin, *The Awakening*
DeLillo, *White Noise*
Ellison, *Invisible Man*
Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury, Absalom, Absalom!, Go Down, Moses*
Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, A Lesson Before Dying*
Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Lytle, *The Velvet Horn, A Wake for the Living*
McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses, The Road*
Morrison, *Beloved, Song of Solomon*
O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*
O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard To Find,” “Parker’s Back,” “The Life You Save May Be Your Own,” “Revelation”
Percy: *The Moviegoer, The Last Gentleman*
Robert Stone, *A Flag for Sunrise*
Stegner, *Crossing to Safety*
Styron, *Lie Down in Darkness*
Taylor, *A Summons to Memphis,* “A Wife of Nashville,” “Dean of Men”
Warren, *All the King’s Men,* “To a Little Girl, One Year Old, in a Ruined Fortress,” “Bearded Oaks,” “Evening Hawk”
Wharton, *The House of Mirth, The Age of Innocence*
Wolfe, *Look Homeward Angel*
Wright, *Native Son*

**Drama**

Edward Albee, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
Foote, *The Trip to Bountiful*
Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
Kushner, *Angels in America (Part I: The Millennium Approaches)*
VIII. Modern and Contemporary British and World Literature

Verse
Auden, “O where are you going,” “As I Walked out One Evening,” “Lullaby,” “September 1, 1939,” “Musée des Beaux Arts,” “In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” “In Praise of Limestone,” “The Shield of Achilles”
Boland, “Anorexic,” “Mise Eire,” “The Pomegranate”
(Carol Ann) Duffy, “Warming Her Pearls,” “Standing Female Nude,” “Anne Hathaway,” “Medusa”
Hardy, “Neutral Tones,” “The Darkling Thrush,” “Channel Firing,” “The Man He Killed”
Larkin, “Church Going,” “The Whitsun Weddings,” “High Windows,” “Sad Steps,” “This Be the Verse,” “Aubade”
Owen, “Dulce Et Decorum Est,” “Greater Love,” “Mental Cases”
Rosenberg, “Break of Day in the Trenches,” “Returning, We Hear Larks”
Sassoon, “Repression of War Experience,” “Everyone Sang,” “On Passing the New Menin Gate”
(Stevie) Smith, “Not Waving But Drowning,” “To Carry the Child,” “Our Bog is Dood,” “Pretty”
Thomas, “The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower,” selected sonnets from Altarwise By Owl-Light, “Fern Hill,” “Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night”

Fiction
Achebe, Things Fall Apart
Adiche, Americanah
Barker, Regeneration
Bowen, The Death of the Heart
Coetzee, Disgrace, Foe, Waiting for the Barbarians,
Cole, Open City
Conrad, The Secret Agent, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim
Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions
Farah, Links
Ford, The Good Soldier
Forster, A Passage to India, Howard’s End
Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*, *The Hungry Tide*

Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, *July’s People*, “Once Upon a Time,” “The Ultimate Safari,” “Safe Houses,” “Keeping Fit”

Joyce, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*

Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, *Sons and Lovers*, “The Rocking-Horse Winner”

Mansfield, “Daughters of the Late Colonel,” “The Garden Party,” “Bliss”

Mistry, *Such a Long Journey*

Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, Lolita

Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas*

Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat*

Ondaatje, *Anil’s Ghost*

Orwell, 1984

Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Roy, *The God of Small Things*

Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame*

Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*

(Zadie) Smith, *White Teeth*

Spark, Muriel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

Trevor, “Death in Jerusalem,” “Beyond the Pale,” “Of the Cloth”

Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*

West, *Return of the Soldier*

Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Winterson, *Written on the Body*

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*

**Drama**

Beckett, *Endgame*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Krapp's Last Tape*

Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*

Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*

Churchill, *Far Away*, *Cloud Nine*

Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*, Hedda Gabler

Friel, *Translations*

Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*

McDonagh, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*

Pinter, *The Homecoming*, *Betrayal*

Soyinka, *Death and the King’s Horseman*

Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Arcadia*, *The Real Thing*

Synge, *Playboy of the Western World*

Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*