



Lincoln College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

**Victorian Literature (1830-1910) Vacation Reading List
Michaelmas 2024**

Dear First Years,

A very warm welcome to Lincoln. Over the summer vacation, you should read *everything* on the Core Reading List and a fair amount of material on the General Reading List, where you should let your own interests and enthusiasms guide you. It is impossible to ‘cover’ the whole Victorian period in the course of an 8-week Oxford term, so prior reading is essential. Term time will be spent reading less well-known primary works and selected pieces of criticism—in addition, of course, to writing essays—so you will simply not have time to get caught up on these primary works during the term.

You are strongly encouraged to settle into a regular reading schedule—reading, for instance, 6-8 hours per day. This will be the only way to get through the material in time. I recognize that this will be more challenging for some than for others, especially if you have other responsibilities over the summer. But do the best you can. Please note now that Victorian novels tend to be long: three of the ‘Core’ novels listed below are 600-800 pp. Again, I cannot emphasize enough the necessity of getting as much reading as possible done over the summer.

You are encouraged to take notes as you read, in whichever way makes the most sense to you (notes in a notebook, in the margins of the text, drawing a line next to important passages, etc). Things you might want to consider include: key terms, issues, or problems; dates of publication; grouping texts according to topic, theme, or genre; drawing connections between authors and between texts; questions you might like to pursue during term, etc. But don’t let overzealous note-taking slow you down such that it impedes your progress through the list.

There will be a written examination on this reading list (with an emphasis on the Core list) in Week 0 of Michaelmas term, just after you arrive. You should have obtained copies of the works on the Core list before arriving. The following editions are recommended:

For the novels, Norton Critical Editions have the advantage of containing excerpts of major criticism, so do get those if you can. Otherwise, an Oxford World’s Classics or Penguin edition would be fine.

For the poetry, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume E: The Victorian Age* (excellent period and author introductions, which you are expected to read).

For the non-fiction prose (Carlyle, Newman, Mill, *et al.*), the excerpts contained in the Norton anthology should suffice for now. Feel free, of course, to obtain and read the full texts if you’re especially interested in them.

Remember that poetry, especially short lyric poetry, demands multiple re-readings, so that you feel yourself to have inhabited and internalized—if not memorized—the poem. I encourage you to read each lyric poem once for pleasure and then re-read with an eye on form, technique, word choice, etc.

If you require financial assistance, remember to keep your receipts, as you may be able to apply for assistance from the College to help defray the costs.

I. CORE READING LIST

Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ‘The Lady of Shalott,’ ‘The Lotus-Eaters,’ ‘Ulysses,’ ‘Tithonus,’ ‘Locksley Hall,’ ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’

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R. Browning, ‘My Last Duchess,’ ‘The Bishop Orders His Tomb,’ ‘Andrea del Sarto,’ ‘Fra Lippo Lippi,’ ‘Caliban upon Setebos’

Arnold, ‘The Scholar Gypsy,’ ‘Dover Beach,’ ‘Thyrsis,’ ‘The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,’ ‘Culture and Anarchy’

Swinburne, ‘Hymn to Proserpine,’ ‘The Garden of Proserpine,’ ‘Ave Atque Vale,’ ‘Anactoria’

Hopkins, ‘God’s Grandeur,’ ‘The Windhover,’ ‘Pied Beauty,’ ‘Spring and Fall,’ ‘Carrion Comfort,’ ‘No Worst, There Is None,’ ‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire,’ ‘Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves’

Dickens, *David Copperfield*

Eliot, *Middlemarch*

James, *The Portrait of a Lady*

Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Carlyle, ‘Past and Present’

Newman, ‘The Idea of a University’ (try to read beyond the anthologized excerpt, if possible), *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*

Mill, ‘What is Poetry?’, ‘The Subjection of Women,’ ‘On Liberty,’ ‘Autobiography’

II. GENERAL READING LIST

With the exception of the novels, the following texts—or representative selections from them—may be found in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume E: The Victorian Age*.

E. Barrett Browning, ‘Aurora Leigh’

Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*

Fitzgerald, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*

C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Gaskell, *North and South*, *Mary Barton*

Dickens, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*

Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*

Ruskin, ‘Modern Painters,’ ‘The Stones of Venice,’ ‘The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century’

Darwin, *Origin of Species*



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Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Daniel Deronda*

Arnold, Preface to *Poems*, 'The Study of Poetry,' 'Literature and Science'

D. Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Blessed Damozel,' 'My Sister's Sleep,' 'The Woodspurge,' 'The House of Life'

C. Rossetti, 'Goblin Market'

Morris, 'How I Became a Socialist'

Pater, *The Renaissance*

Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 'On the Western Circuit,' 'Hap,' 'Neutral Tones,' 'I Look into My Glass,' 'Drummer Hodge,' 'The Darkling Thrush,' 'The Ruined Maid'

Gissing, *New Grub Street*

III. SECONDARY READING (recommended)

We will discuss secondary texts when you arrive, but if you would like to become acquainted with some criticism/background reading over the summer, here are some texts to get you started:

Armstrong, Isobel. *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics*

Gilmour, Robin. *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of Victorian Literature, 1830-1890*

IV. GENERAL/REFERENCE WORKS (required)

You are strongly encouraged to obtain these texts and to consult them throughout the term/year. The two chapters on Victorian literature (pp.405-513) in Sanders' *Short Oxford History* are required vacation reading, though feel free to dip into the others.

The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*

The Elements of Style, ed. Strunk and White

Sanders, Andrew. *A Short Oxford History of English Literature*

I very much look forward to welcoming you in the autumn.

Yours sincerely,

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