Suggested Readings for the Comprehensive Exam  
of the English Department of the University of the South  
(updated October 2013)

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 include Albert C. Baugh’s *A Literary History of England* and Alastair Fowler’s *A History of English Literature*. 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 *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* by Margaret Drabble.

I. 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)  
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*

**II. Medieval Literature**

*Beowulf*
“Caedmon’s Hymn”

*Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, The Canterbury Tales, Parliament of Fowls*
Everyman, *The Wakefield Second Shepherd’s Play*

Julian of Norwich, Norton selections from *The Showings of Divine Love*
Margery Kempe, Norton selections from *The Book of Margery Kempe*
Malory, *Morte Darthur* (I, VII, VIII)

*Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
Selected Plays from the York Mystery Cycle

**III. Renaissance Literature**

Browne, “Urn Burial,” “Garden of Cyrus,” *Religio Medici*
Burton, Norton selections from *Anatomy of Melancholy*

Campion, “My Sweetest Lesbia” and “There is a Garden in her Face”
Carew, “Elegy,” “A Rapture”

Cavendish, Norton selections from *The Blazing World*
Crashaw, “The Weeper,” “The Flaming Heart”


Dekker and Middleton, *The Roaring Girl*
Drayton, “Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part”
Herbert, “Easter Wings,” “The Altar,” “The Flower,” “The Collar,” “The Pulley,” “The Temper (I) and (II),” ”Jordan (I) and (II),” ”Love (III),” “Redemption,” “Prayer (I),” “Denial,” “Time,” “The Bunch of Grapes”


Jonson, “To Penshurst,” “On My First Son,” “To the Memory of My Master William

Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy
Lanyer, Amelia, “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 Ovid’s Elegies 1.5
Middleton, The Changeling, The Revenger’s Tragedy
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!"

IV. Shakespeare

A Midsummer-Night’s Dream  Antony and Cleopatra  As You Like It
Hamlet  Henry IV, Part 1  Henry IV, Part 2
Henry V  Julius Caesar  King Lear
Love’s Labour’s Lost  Macbeth  Measure for Measure
The Merchant of Venice  Much Ado About Nothing  Othello
Richard II  Romeo and Juliet  The Sonnets
The Tempest  Troilus and Cressida  Twelfth Night
The Winter’s Tale  Richard III  Taming of the Shrew
V. 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*


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*

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*

Wollstencraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*

Wycherley, *The Country Wife*

VI. Nineteenth-Century British Literature

Present Time,” selections from *Culture and Anarchy*
Austen, *Pride and Prejudice, Emma*
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*
Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (III), *Don Juan* (I), “She Walks in Beauty,” “So, We’ll Go No More a Roving”
Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*
Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
Carlyle, Selections from *Sartor Resartus*
Dickens, *Bleak House, Hard Times, David Copperfield*
Eliot, George, *Middlemarch*
Fitzgerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*
Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*
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*
Christina Rossetti, Christina, *Goblin Market,* “In an Artist’s Studio,” “When I Am Dead”
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Blessed Damozel," “Jenny”
Ruskin, Selections from *Modern Painters and The Stones of Venice*
Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian, Ivanhoe*
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Swinburne, "Hymn To Proserpine," "Hertha"
Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Treasure Island*
Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*
Trollope, *Barchester Towers*
Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
VII. American Literature through the Nineteenth Century

Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," "A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment," "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,” “Because I could not stop for Death,” “A Route of Evanescentce,” “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," "My Life had stood--a Loaded Gun," "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


Irving, History of New York, “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

Longfellow, Ballads and Other Poems

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 Maecenas”


Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”
VIII. 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*
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)*
Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
Parks, *Topdog/Underdog*
Williams, *The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat on a Hot Tim Roof*

**IX. 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*

Barker, *Regeneration*

Bowen, *The Death of the Heart*

Coetzee, *Disgrace, Foe, Waiting for the Barbarians*
Conrad, *The Secret Agent, Heart of Darkness*
Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*
Ford, *The Good Soldier*
Forster, *A Passage to India, Howard’s End*
Gordimer, "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”
Nabokov, *Pale Fire, Lolita*
Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat*
Orwell, 1984
Rhys, Jean, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Roy, *The God of Small Things*
Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*
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*
Winter, *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*