Lincoln College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Victorian Literature (1830-1910) Vacation Reading List
Michaelmas 2026

Dear First Years,

A very warm welcome to Lincoln College. I'm greatly looking forward to working with you next term. You'll find the vacation reading list for Prelims Paper 3 below. 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. This vacation reading is absolutely essential. Term time will be spent reading less well-known primary works and selected pieces of criticism—in addition to writing essays, of course—so you will simply not have time to get caught up on these primary works during the term. So the more you are able to get done over the summer, the more enjoyable and successful your term will be.

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 work or other responsibilities over the summer. Simply do the best you can.

You are encouraged to take notes as you read, in whichever way makes the most sense to you. Things you might want to consider include: key terms, issues, or problems; important passages; 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.

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 coming up. The following editions are recommended:

For the novels, a recent Oxford World's Classics, Penguin, or Norton Critical Edition (Norton Critical Editions have the advantage of containing excerpts of major criticism, so do get those if you can).

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 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 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'

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*

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

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

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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

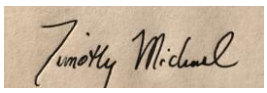
Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*

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.

All best wishes,



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