

English Literature of the Eighteenth Century
Suggestions for Reading
in Preparation for Doctoral Examinations

You probably know that literary historians use the term "eighteenth century" to describe a period of English letters spanning, roughly, the years 1660-1798. As you use this reading list to study for your examination, think of the phrase "eighteenth century" to be so defined and prepare thusly.

Because the canon of English literature is mutable, you need to be ready to evaluate critically such concepts as "major" and "minor," just as our eighteenth-century predecessors did. Despite changing critical perceptions of various authors, however, you will quickly see that certain figures such as Dryden, Swift, Pope, Richardson, Fielding, and Johnson are widely perceived as major.

Those who make up and grade your examination expect you to be able to discuss the period's major authors readily and fully. You should demonstrate that you have read and reflected on significant works by major authors. In addition, you should have read sufficient works by minor authors so that you can discuss contexts and trends effectively. For example, you should be able to discuss developments in various genres such as prose fiction or poetic satire, pointing out contributions by both major and minor figures.

You should be able to define literary terms fully and correctly, pointing out specific applications to eighteenth-century literature. You should be able to identify correctly the names of authors, printers, booksellers, literary characters, and other persons real or imaginary—who figure in the eighteenth-century literary world. No selective list can cover every possible area of investigation thoroughly, but the following list should assist you in choosing readings.

The makers of your examination also expect you to know significant critical works and bibliographic tools useful to students of the period. We include here a very selected list of resources, intended as a starting point for your study. Using your research skills, you should locate and familiarize yourself with recent, significant scholarship on the major authors and on the literary background of the period.

Your doctoral examinations are a major step towards your degree, and we urge that you read carefully and thoughtfully in preparation for them. Familiarity with primary sources is essential; someone who can write and speak with authority about the primary sources is well on the way to a creditable performance on the examination in eighteenth-century English literature.

We also hope that you will approach the task of preparing for this examination with zest and pleasure. We do not set out to trick you or make you look bad; we look forward to seeing you do well. If you approach the examination with pleasure and confidence as well as thorough preparation, you should gratify us all.

Primary sources

John Dryden, "Essay of Dramatic Poesie," *All for Love*, "MacFlecknoe," *Absalom and Achitophel*, "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," "Alexander's Feast," "To the Pious Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew"; selections from "Religio Laici," "The Medal," "The Hind and the Panther," and from the *Fables* (including its Preface)

John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, "A Satyr Against Mankind," and selected lyrics

William Wycherley, *The Country Wife* or *The Plain Dealer*

George Etherege, *The Man of Mode*

Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*

Selections from scientific writers such as Robert Hooke and Robert Boyle, and from Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*

The Citizen of the World, and the poetry

Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*

Selected poems by Christopher Smart, Thomas Chatterton, Thomas and Joseph Warton

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* or *The School for Scandal*

James Boswell, Selections from *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, from the journals, and from the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*

Selections from prose by Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, Edward Gibbon, and David Hume

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*

Tobias Smollet, *Humphry Clinker* or *Roderick Random*

Selections from Gothic fiction by Horace Walpole, M.G. Lewis, and Ann Radcliffe

Anthologies:

British Women Poets 1600-1800. An Anthology, ed. Joyce Fullard (Whitston, 1990); *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730: An Anthology*, eds. P. Barkscheider and J. Richetti (Oxford, 1996); *British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology*, ed. Demaria (Blackwell Anthologies, 1996); *Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, ed. G. Tillotson, et al (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1989)

Secondary sources

The latest MLA bibliography entries (available on CD-ROM) provide current criticism on topics related to eighteenth-century literature. Volumes in the *Oxford History of English Literature* series by James Sutherland, Bonamy Dobree, and John Butt offer advice about primary and secondary reading as well as contextual discussions. Entries in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* contain helpful bio/critical essays and reasonably up-to-date reading lists. A review essay appearing annually in *SEL* considers pertinent scholarship on the period, and other journals such as *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, *The Scriblerian* and *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* also include annual review essays.

1993, 1994, 1998
phdread.lst

Selections from John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1; from Richard Baxter, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*; from Isaac Watts, hymns; and from William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* and a selected play

Selected prose by Sir William Temple, Dorothy Osborne, John Evelyn, Samuel Pepys, and John Dennis

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (or *Moll Flanders* or *Roxana*). "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters"; selections from *The Review*, *An Essay upon Projects*, *The Family Instructor*, *The Complete English Tradesman*, and *A Tour through . . . Great Britain*

Selected fiction by Eliza Haywood and Delariviere Manley

Jonathan Swift, "The Battle of the Books," *A Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver's Travels*; selections from the poetry including "The Lady's Dressing Room" and "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift"; from *The Intelligencer*; from *The Drapier's Letters* and other Irish tracts

William Congreve, *The Way of the World*

One or two tragic plays selected from the following: Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserved*; Joseph Addison, *Cato*; Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent*

Selected poems by Katherine Philips; Anne Killigrew; Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea; John Oldham; and Matthew Prior

Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, Selections from the *Tatler* and *Spectator*

Alexander Pope, "Windsor Forest," "An Essay on Criticism," "The Rape of the Lock," "Eloisa to Abelard," *The Dunciad* (in four books), and selections to include several of the following: *Pastorals*, *Essay on Man*, *Imitations of Horace*, one of the *Moral Essays*, two books of the *Iliad*, "The Unfortunate Lady" and the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"

Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Selections from prose and verse

James Thomson, *The Seasons* (selections)

Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*

John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* or substantial selections from *Clarissa*

Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones*

Fanny Burney, *Evelina*

Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes," *Rasselas*, selections from the periodical essays, the "Prefaces to Shakespeare" and to the *Dictionary*, selected *Lives of the Poets* (notably Cowley, Milton, Swift, Dryden, Pope, Gray)

Selected poems by William Collins, William Cowper, Thomas Gray, and Robert Burns

Selected letters by Pope, Swift, Johnson, Gray, Walpole, and Cowper

Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and selections from the *Life of Nash*,