

The Master's Reading List

Upon entering the M.A. program in English, each graduate student should procure a copy of the Master's Reading List, upon which the Master's Comprehensive Exam is based. While the student's coursework, if properly managed, should provide a solid grounding in the advanced study of English and American literature, it must be supplemented with independent reading from the List to ensure sufficient command. In other words, the student is responsible for gaining mastery of the works on the List through judicious selection of courses and supplementary reading. The student is also advised to review the introductory sections and relevant author headnotes in the Norton English and American Literature anthologies when preparing for the exam. Of course, critical surveys and companion references (e.g., Oxford, Cambridge) to English and American literature may also be helpful, although they are no substitute for mastery of the primary texts.

Registering for the Exam

As the student nears completion of coursework (generally in the student's final semester of study), he or she should inform the English Department office of intent to take the Master's Comprehensive Exam. The exam is given on Monday (ID section) and Tuesday (Essays) in the first full week of April, July, and November. The department office will provide specifics of place and time when contacted by the student, who should register no later than one month before the exam date.

The Exam Committee

A committee consisting of three graduate faculty members from the department will be responsible for making, administering/proctoring, and grading the exam. Each Exam Committee will serve a period of one year, extending from the fall through the following summer semesters. Should a vacancy occur during that period, the Graduate Coordinator will appoint a replacement.

Taking the Exam

Once a student has entered the examination room and looked at the exam, he/she is considered to have officially attempted the exam. In other words, if the student then decides not to attempt the exam, the act of looking still counts as a 'take.'

The exam itself consists of two parts: a short-answer (ID) section comprising character names, titles of works, literary terms, dates, brief quotations, and similar items that reflect the historical proportions of the Reading List; and an essay section organized in accordance with the historical division of the List.

- (1) Sample model responses to the various types of items likely to appear on the ID section of the exam will be available for inspection by the graduate students in the department office. When taking the exam, the student will have ninety minutes to respond to twenty

of the thirty items on the ID section. In order to earn full credit (one point) for a response, the student will have to demonstrate not only precise knowledge of the item's significance, but also an awareness of its generic/historical context. The graders may give partial credit at their discretion. No credit will be given for extra (more than twenty) responses. A passing score will be 16/20, or 80%; at least two of the three graders will have to assign a passing grade for the student to be passed on this section of the exam.

- (2) Of the seven essay topics on the exam, five cover periods of English literature (Medieval, Renaissance & Seventeenth Century, Restoration & Eighteenth Century, Nineteenth Century, Twentieth Century), and two cover periods of American literature (Prior to 1860, 1860-Present). Further, two of the seven topics are passage-based. Each student will select three topics, at least one of which must be on the American side, and write an essay on each. While the student will be given ninety minutes to write each essay, the graders will be expecting the equivalent of a thoughtful, organized, detailed, hour-long essay on each topic. As with the ID section, two of the three graders will have to assign a passing grade to each essay in order for the student to be passed on that particular exam component. The following statement expresses the graduate faculty's expectations for student performance on the essay section of the exam:

Students should keep in mind that the essay portion of the exam is intended to test not only their concrete knowledge of literature, but also their ability to place individual writers and works in the various general contexts (literary, cultural, historical) in which those writers and works exist. Therefore, those taking the examination should remember that, while knowledge is important, the graduate faculty also expects to see in the essays evidence of a *synthetic and critical understanding* of literature itself and of the historical periods in which literature is created.

Finally, students should take care to *respond to the specific topics as they are stated*.

Receiving Exam Results

Normally, students will be notified of exam results within two weeks of the exam date.

Retaking the Exam/Appeals Committee

A student need only retake those parts of the exam (e.g., an essay, the ID section) that have received a failing grade. (In the event of a failed essay, the student may attempt any of the periods not yet passed, as long as the American-essay requirement mentioned above [**Taking the Exam (2)**] is met in the process.) Any student who fails some portion of the exam must meet with the Exam Committee to review his or her performance and seek advice about preparation for a retake. The student must have this consultation session in order to be eligible for a retake.

Retakes will normally be scheduled on the days in April, July, and November appointed for the Master's Comprehensive Exam.

Any exception to this scheduling rule will be at the discretion of an Appeals Committee, consisting of the Graduate Coordinator and three graduate faculty members chosen by lot (excluding the members of that year's Exam Committee). The Graduate Coordinator will be a nonvoting member of the committee.

Further, the Appeals Committee will consider petitions from any student who has failed one or more parts of the Comprehensive Exam on a second attempt and wishes a third (and final) chance. The student cannot automatically assume a right to take the exam a third time. He or she will need to offer mitigating circumstances and/or a plan to address deficiencies. If the Appeals Committee approves a third attempt, it may assign the student a graduate faculty mentor to monitor the student's preparation for the final retake.

The Appeals Committee will *not* overrule the pass/fail judgments of the Exam Committee.

Information Sessions

The Graduate Coordinator will meet with graduate students early in the fall and spring semesters for purposes of general orientation and review of Comprehensive Exam procedures.

MASTER'S EXAM READING LIST

Medieval

Beowulf

Wanderer

Battle of Maldon

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*: "Account of the Poet Caedmon" and "The Conversion of King Edwin"

The Dream of the Rood

Lyrics: "Western Wind," "Summer Is Icumen In," "Adam Lay Ybounden"

Ballads: "Edward, Edward," "Sir Patrick Spens," "Lord Randall"

Langland: *Piers Plowman* (Passus 18)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Chaucer: *General Prologue, The Miller's Prologue and Tale, The Wife of Bath's Prologue, Words of the Host to the Physician and Pardoner, Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales; Troilus and Criseyde* (to be read in Middle English)

Chaucer: Lyrics: "Truth" ("Balade of Bon Conseyl") and "Complaint to His Purse"

Julian of Norwich: *A Book of Showings*, from Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, 27, 58-61, 86 (Norton Anthology selections)

Margery Kempe: *The Book of Margery Kempe*, from Chapters 1, 2, 11, 18, 28, 52, 76 (Norton Anthology selections)

The Second Shepherds' Play

Everyman

Malory: *Morte Darthur*, Caxton Books XX, XXI

Renaissance and Seventeenth Century

John Skelton: "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming," "Phillip Sparrow"

Thomas Wyatt: "Whoso list to hunt," "They flee from me," "My lute, awake!," "Mine own John Poins"

Thomas More: *Utopia*

Sir Philip Sidney: *Astrophil and Stella* (Sonnets 1, 2, 5, 6, 15, 21, 31, 39, 41, 45, 49, 52, 53, 71, 74, 81)

Edmund Spenser: *The Faerie Queene* ("Letter to Raleigh" and Book I), *Amoretti* (Sonnets 1, 34, 37, 67, 68, 75, 79), *Epithalamion*

Christopher Marlowe: *Doctor Faustus*

William Shakespeare: Sonnets 3, 18, 20, 29, 30, 55, 60, 71, 73, 94, 116, 129, 130, 138, 144, 146

Shakespeare: *Hamlet, King Lear, A Midsummer Night's Dream, 1 Henry IV, Twelfth Night, The Tempest*

Mary Wroth: *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (Sonnets 1, 16, 39, 40, 68, 77, 103)

John Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi*

Ben Jonson: *Volpone*, “Song: To Celia,” “To the Memory of Shakespeare,” “Inviting a Friend to Supper,” “To Penshurst,” “To Heaven,” “Ode to Cary and Morison”

John Donne: “The Good Morrow,” “The Sun Rising,” “The Indifferent,” “The Canonization,” “The Flea,” “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” “The Ecstasy,” “Elegy 19,” “Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward,” Holy Sonnets 5, 7, 10, 14, Meditation 17

Robert Herrick: “Delight in Disorder,” “Corinna’s Going A-Maying,” “To the Virgins,” “Upon Julia’s Clothes”

George Herbert: “Easter Wings,” “Prayer (1),” “Jordan (1),” “The Collar,” “The Pulley,” “Love (3)”

Andrew Marvell: “To His Coy Mistress,” “The Garden,” *Upon Appleton House*

Francis Bacon: Essays (“Of Truth,” “Of Great Place,” “Of Superstition,” “Of Studies”)

Sir Thomas Browne: *Religio Medici*

John Milton: *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, *Areopagitica*, “Lycidas,” “L’Allegro,” “Il Penseroso”

Restoration and Eighteenth Century

John Dryden: *Mac Flecknoe*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*

William Congreve: *The Way of the World*

Alexander Pope: *Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: “The Lover: A Ballad”

Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver’s Travels*, “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,” “A Modest Proposal”

John Gay: *The Beggar’s Opera*

Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*

Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones*

Thomas Gray: “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College”

William Collins: “Ode on the Poetical Character,” “Ode to Evening”

Oliver Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village*

Samuel Johnson: *Rasselas*, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, “Pope” and “Milton” from *Lives of the Poets*

James Boswell: *Life of Johnson* (Hibbert’s Abridged Edition)

Laurence Sterne: *Tristram Shandy*

Robert Burns: “Address to the Deil,” “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” “Tam O’Shanter”

Nineteenth Century

- William Blake: *Songs of Innocence and Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*
- William Wordsworth: "Tintern Abbey," "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," "Resolution and Independence," "Elegiac Stanzas," *Michael, The Prelude I-II*, Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*
- S. T. Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Christabel*, "Kubla Khan," "Frost at Midnight," "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," "Dejection: An Ode"
- Lord Byron: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, III-IV, *Manfred, Don Juan*, I-IV
- Sir Walter Scott: *Waverley*
- P. B. Shelley: "Ode to the West Wind," "The Cloud," "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," "To a Sky-Lark," *Adonais*, "Mont Blanc"
- John Keats: Odes ("Nightingale," "Grecian Urn," "Melancholy"), Sonnets ("Chapman's Homer," "Bright Star," "When I Have Fears"), *The Eve of St. Agnes*, "To Autumn"
- William Hazlitt: "On Gusto," "My First Acquaintance with Poets"
- Charles Lamb: "Old China," "Dream Children"
- Thomas De Quincey: "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*"
- Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*
- Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*
- Thomas Carlyle: *Sartor Resartus*
- Lord Tennyson: "The Lady of Shalott," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Ulysses," "Tithonus," "Locksley Hall," *In Memoriam*
- Robert Browning: "My Last Duchess," "Andrea del Sarto," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," "Abt Vogler"
- E. B. Browning: *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (21, 22, 32, 43), *Aurora Leigh*, Books 1, 2, 5
- John Ruskin: "The Roots of Honor" from *Unto This Last*, "The Nature of Gothic" from *The Stones of Venice*
- Matthew Arnold: "Memorial Verses," "The Scholar Gypsy," "Dover Beach," "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," "The Study of Poetry"
- A. C. Swinburne: "Hymn to Proserpine," "The Garden of Proserpine," "The Triumph of Time"
- Christina Rossetti: "Goblin Market"
- G. M. Hopkins: "God's Grandeur," "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty," "Spring and Fall," "Carrion Comfort," "No Worst, There Is None," "I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, Not Day," "Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord"
- Lewis Carroll: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- Emily Bronte: *Wuthering Heights*
- Charlotte Bronte: *Jane Eyre*
- Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*
- George Eliot: *Middlemarch*
- Anthony Trollope: *Barchester Towers*
- W. M. Thackeray: *Vanity Fair*
- Oscar Wilde: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Twentieth Century

- Thomas Hardy: "Hap," "The Darkling Thrush," "The Convergence of the Twain," "Neutral Tones," "Channel Firing"
- W. B. Yeats: "The Stolen Child," "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "Adam's Curse," "September 1913," "The Wild Swans at Coole," "Easter 1916," "The Second Coming," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Leda and the Swan," "Among School Children," "Byzantium," "A Prayer for My Daughter," "Long-Legged Fly," "Lapis Lazuli," "The Circus Animals' Desertion," "Under Ben Bulbin"
- Wilfred Owen: "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Strange Meeting," "Disabled"
- D. H. Lawrence: "Piano," "Snake," "Bavarian Gentians," "The Ship of Death"
- W. H. Auden: "Musee des Beaux Arts," "Lullaby," "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," "In Praise of Limestone," "The Shield of Achilles"
- Dylan Thomas: "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," "A Refusal to Mourn...", "Fern Hill"
- Philip Larkin: "Church Going," "High Windows"
- Ted Hughes: "Pike," "Examination at the Womb-Door," "Theology"
- Seamus Heaney: "Digging," "Punishment," "The Strand at Lough Beg"
- G. B. Shaw: *Arms and the Man*
- Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*
- J. M. Synge: *The Playboy of the Western World*
- James Joyce: "Araby," "The Dead," *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*
- D. H. Lawrence: *Women in Love*
- Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*
- E. M. Forster: *A Passage to India*
- Harold Pinter: *The Homecoming*
- Tom Stoppard: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*
- Derek Walcott: "As John to Patmos," "A Far Cry from Africa," "Ruins of a Great House," "North and South"
- Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart*
- Salman Rushdie: *Satanic Verses*

American Literature Prior to 1860

- American Indian Myths and Tales: Pima story of the creation and flood; Winnebago trickster cycle (Norton Anthology selections)
- William Bradford: *Of Plymouth Plantation* (Norton Anthology selections)
- John Winthrop: "A Model of Christian Charity"
- Mary Rowlandson: *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration*
- Anne Bradstreet: "To My Dear and Loving Husband," "Before the Birth of One of Her Children," "In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet," "In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Anne Bradstreet," "On My Dear Grandchild Simon Bradstreet"

Edward Taylor: selections from the *Preparatory Meditations*, including “Prologue,” First Series—22, Second Series—26

Jonathan Edwards: “Personal Narrative,” “A Divine and Supernatural Light,” “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Benjamin Franklin: *Autobiography*, Books I & II

Phillis Wheatley: “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “To His Excellency General Washington”

St. Jean de Crevecoeur: “What Is an American?”

Washington Irving: “Rip Van Winkle”

James Fenimore Cooper: *The Pioneers*

Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Nature*, “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address”

Henry David Thoreau: *Walden*, “Civil Disobedience”

Nathaniel Hawthorne: *The Scarlet Letter*, “Young Goodman Brown,” “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” “The Minister’s Black Veil”

Edgar Allan Poe: “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Philosophy of Composition,” “To Helen,” “The Raven,” “Israfel”

Frederick Douglass: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

Harriet Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Chapters 1, 7, 10, 14, 21, 41

Herman Melville: *Moby-Dick*, “Bartleby the Scrivener,” “The House-Top,” “The Maldive Shark,” *Billy Budd*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “My Lost Youth,” “The Arsenal at Springfield,” “The Fire of Driftwood,” “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport”

Walt Whitman: *Song of Myself*, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” “The Wound Dresser”

1860 to Present

Mark Twain: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Emily Dickinson: poems numbered 67, 125, 130, 214, 258, 280, 303, 328, 341, 435, 448, 449, 465, 632, 657, 712, 754, 986, 1071, 1129, 1732

Henry James: *Portrait of a Lady*, “Daisy Miller,” “The Beast in the Jungle”

Sarah Orne Jewett: “A White Heron,” “The Foreigner”

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: “A New England Nun,” “The Revolt of Mother”

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: “The Yellow Wallpaper”

Booker T. Washington: *Up From Slavery*, Chapters I, XIV

W. E. B. Dubois: *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapters I, III

Stephen Crane: *The Red Badge of Courage*, “The Open Boat,” “The Blue Hotel,” “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky”

Kate Chopin: *The Awakening*

Edith Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*

Theodore Dreiser: *Sister Carrie*

Willa Cather: “Neighbour Rosicky”

Robert Frost: "After Apple-Picking," "Home Burial," "Birches," "Design," "Desert Places,"
 "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

T. S. Eliot: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, "Tradition and the
 Individual Talent"

Ezra Pound: "In a Station of the Metro," "To Whistler, American," "A Pact," "Portrait d'une
 Femme," "The River-Merchant's Wife," *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*

William Carlos Williams: "Spring and All," "The Red Wheelbarrow," "This Is Just To Say,"
 "The Widow's Lament in Springtime," "The Dance," "Tract," "The Yachts," "To Elsie"

Wallace Stevens: "Peter Quince at the Clavier," "Sunday Morning," "Anecdote of the Jar,"
 "The Snow Man," "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman," "The Emperor of Ice Cream,"
 "The Idea of Order at Key West," "Of Modern Poetry"

Langston Hughes: "Theme for English B," "Epilogue (I, too, sing America)," "Harlem"

Hart Crane: *The Bridge*

F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Ernest Hemingway: *The Sun Also Rises*, "Hills Like White Elephants," "The Short Happy Life
 of Francis Macomber"

William Faulkner: *The Sound and the Fury*, "A Rose for Emily," "Barn Burning," "The Old
 People"

Zora Neale Hurston: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Eugene O'Neill: *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Eudora Welty: "A Worn Path," "Petrified Man"

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Flannery O'Connor: "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," "Revelation,"
 "Everything That Rises Must Converge," "Parker's Back"

Ralph Ellison: *Invisible Man*

Robert Lowell: "The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket," "Skunk Hour," "For the Union Dead,"

Allen Ginsberg: "Howl"

Arthur Miller: *Death of a Salesman*

Elizabeth Bishop: "The Fish," "Questions of Travel," "The Armadillo," "In the Waiting Room,"
 "Crusoe in England"

Richard Wright: *Native Son*

James Baldwin: "Sonny's Blues"

Toni Morrison: *Beloved*

Joyce Carol Oates: "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"

John Updike: "A & P"

Philip Roth: "The Conversion of the Jews," "Defender of the Faith"

Sylvia Plath: "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus"

N. Scott Momaday: *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Leslie Marmon Silko: *Ceremony*

Louise Erdrich: "Fleur"

Don DeLillo: *White Noise*