

Dept. of English & Comparative Literature, SJSU
MA Exam Reading List: Group 1

Early Modern & Neoclassical British & American Literature (16th-18th C)

Description: This area of the exam focuses on early modern and neoclassical British and American literature. Students should have a general knowledge of the rules of the following forms, and how these forms are used/deployed in different historical and cultural moments:

Drama (all modes). Some attention should be paid to sub-genres like revenge-tragedy and city-comedy

Poetry:

Epic
Sonnet
Lyric
Elegy
Valediction
Pastoral
Epithalamion

Prose:

Satire
Sermon
Meditation
Essay
Romance
Prose Fiction

Facility with early modern prose as well as poetry is necessary as is an ability to explicate poetry and prose and to use close reading skills to construct an argument.

Students should also familiarize themselves with the general biographical, cultural, and historical material for the various authors and their related periods. A review of the information included in the headnotes of most major anthologies is sufficient.

***Selections from The Norton or similar anthology acceptable**

Sir Thomas More	<i>Utopia</i>
Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder*	focus on sonnets
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*	focus on sonnets
Queen Elizabeth I	Speeches and Letters*
Sir Philip Sidney	<i>Astrophel and Stella</i> , <i>The Old Arcadia</i> , <i>The Defense of Poesy</i>
Mary Sidney	<i>Psalms*</i>
Edmund Spenser	<i>Amoretti and Epithalamion</i> , <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , Books 1-3, <i>The Shepheardes Calender</i> .
Lady Mary Wroth	<i>Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*</i>
Christopher Marlowe	<i>The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus</i> (A Text), one other play (e.g., <i>Tamburlaine</i> , <i>Edward II</i> , or <i>The Jew of Malta</i>)
Thomas Kyd	<i>The Spanish Tragedy</i>
William Shakespeare	Sonnet Sequence Dramatic Works: 2 from each mode (i.e., comedy, tragedy, history, and “romance”), <i>Venus and Adonis</i> .
Andrew Marvell	“To His Coy Mistress,” “Upon Appleton House”*
Ben Jonson	<i>Epicoene</i> <i>Volpone</i>
John Donne	Holy Sonnets, “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” Elegy 16 and 19
George Herbert	“The Altar,” “Jordan (I),” “Love (III)”
Middleton and Dekker	<i>The Roaring Girl</i>
Margaret Cavendish*	<i>The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World</i>
John Milton	<i>Paradise Lost</i>
Aphra Behn	<i>The Rover</i> <i>Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave</i> .
Daniel Defoe	<i>Moll Flanders</i> OR <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>
Alexander Pope	<i>The Rape of the Lock</i> <i>An Essay on Man</i>

Jonathan Swift

Gulliver's Travels

William Bradford

Of Plymouth Plantation

Anne Bradstreet

"The Prologue," "In Honour of Du Bartas," "In Honour of Queen Elizabeth," "Contemplations," "The Flesh and the Spirit," "The Author to her Book," "Before the Birth of One of Her Children," "A Letter to Her Husband Absent upon Public Employment," "In Reference to her Children," "In Memory of her grandchild Anne Bradstreet," "In Memory of her grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet," "On my dear Grand-child Simon Bradstreet," "To My Dear Children," "My Dear Children," "Upon the Burning of Our House," "As Weary Pilgrim"

Mary White Rowlandson

Narrative of the Captivity & Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson

Edward Taylor

From the Preparatory Meditations: Prologue, Series I.1 I.8, Series II.1, II.26, II.43, II.50, II.60B, II.115
God's Determinations touching his Elect
"Upon a Spider Catching a Fly," "Huswifery," "Upon a Wasp Chill'd with Cold," "Upon the Sweeping Flood," "Upon Wedlock, & Death of Children," "The Ebb & Flow"
"A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God,"
"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"

Jonathan Edwards

The Nature of True Virtue

Benjamin Franklin

Autobiography

Phillis Wheatley

Prefatorial materials from the first edition
"To Maecenas," "On Virtue," "To the University of Cambridge, in New England"
"On Being Brought from Africa to America," "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield. 1770," "Thoughts on the Works of Providence," "To a Clergyman on the Death of His Lady," "On Recollection," "On Imagination," "A Funeral Poem on the Death of C.E. an Infant of Twelve Months," "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth," "On the Death of J.C. an Infant," "To S.M. a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works," "America," "To the King's Most Excellent Majesty," "To His Excellency George Washington," "Liberty and Peace"

Sample Questions

1. After 1492, European colonization and new realms of exploration became a popular source for literary inspiration. Compare and contrast three texts of your own choosing (plays, poems, or prose) from the early modern-neoclassical periods that specifically thematize the impact of the “new” world. You should consider the nature of the “new” land and the native peoples that inhabit them and the potential it represents both as a literary device for the authors and as a site of escape or exile for the protagonists of the texts
2. Choose two sonnets from Wyatt, Surrey, Philip Sidney, or Spenser and two religious lyrics (including sonnets) from Mary Sidney, Donne, or George Herbert. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast how the sonnet or lyric is adapted by each author for erotic or devotional ends. Discuss any overlap with or development from the erotic/amorous lyric tradition to the devotional mode.

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