The Master's Comprehensive List

The Master's Comprehensive Examination is based on the following reading list of works that represent the major genres, periods and authors of these literatures. The student is expected to be familiar with all of the works in two of the listed subject areas, unless submitting a thesis, and to be able to place and discuss the works in critical and historical contexts. A selection of standard works on criticism and literary history is appended to the reading list, though the student will not be examined on these works specifically.

The examination consists of a morning and an afternoon session, each lasting two hours. The morning session includes 5 brief, key passages chosen from works on the reading list. Each passage represents a significant moment in the text from which it is taken, or is characteristic of its author's thought or literary style. The examinee is asked to identify the passages by author and title, and to write a one paragraph (four or five sentence) explanation of why the passages are significant in terms of the work as a whole and in terms of the literary historical period in question. In the afternoon session, the student will write a one-hour essay which refers to at least four works from the period.

Students who write a scholarly thesis may likewise be responsible for one, rather than two, subject areas. However, the area must be a different one than the area covered in the thesis.

Students must inform the Graduate Director of their intention to take the exam at least one month prior to the exam date. At this time, they must identify the one or two periods on which they would like to be tested.

Major Subject Areas
Medieval & Renaissance
17th & 18th Century British Literature
Romantic and Victorian Literature
American Literature (Colonial to 1900)
20th Century Literature
Literary Criticism

Supplemental List of Historical and Critical Reading
Bibliographies
Literary Histories
Literary Theory and Criticism

I. Medieval and Renaissance (to 1640)
   1. Beowulf
   2. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*: General Prologue; Prologues and Tales of the Knight; Miller; Wife of Bath; Merchant; Franklin
   3. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
   4. *The Second Shepherds' Play*
   5. More, *Utopia*
   6. Sidney, *Apologie for Poesie*
   7. Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*
   8. Jonson, *Volpone*
10. Shakespeare, *Hamlet; King Lear; The Tempest; Henry V; Twelfth Night; Measure for Measure*
11. Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*
13. Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"

**II. 17th and 18th Centuries**

1. Milton, *Paradise Lost*
2. Wycherley, *The Country Wife*
3. Dryden, *All for Love*
4. Behn, *Oroonoko*
5. Pope, "The Rape of the Lock"; "Eloisa to Abelard"; "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"; "An Essay on Criticism"
6. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
7. Swift, "A Modest Proposal"; *Gulliver's Travels*
8. Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*
9. Fielding, *Tom Jones*
10. Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*
11. Burney, *Evelina*
12. Austen, *Emma*

**III. Romantic and Victorian**

1. Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*
2. Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, including the 1802 Preface; "Michael"; "Resolution and Independence"; "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"
4. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto 3; Don Juan, Canto 1*
5. P. Shelley, "Mont Blanc"; "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"; "Ode to the West Wind"; "Adonais"; "To a Skylark"; "Ozymandias"
6. Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes"; "To a Nightingale"; "Ode on a Grecian Urn"; "Ode on Melancholy"; "The Fall of Hyperion"; "To Autumn"
7. M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*
8. Tennyson, "Ulysses"; *In Memoriam, A.H.H.*
9. Browning, "My Last Duchess"; "Meeting at Night"; "Parting at Morning"; "The Bishop Orders His Tomb"; "Fra Lippo Lippi"; "Andrea Del Sarto"
10. Dickens, *Hard Times*
11. E. Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
13. Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

[Back to Top]
IV. American Literature, Colonial - 1900
2. Rowlandson, A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson
3. Franklin, The Autobiography
4. Emerson, Nature; The American Scholar
5. Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.
7. Melville, Moby Dick.
8. Thoreau, Walden, Chapters 1,2,7,11,16-18.
9. Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century
11. Dickinson, “I felt a funeral, in my Brain” (P280); “Some keep the Sabbath going to Church-” (P324); “After great pain, a formal feeling comes” (P341); “This was a Poet-It is That” (448); “I heard a Fly buzz-when I died-” (P465); “Because I could not stop For Death-” (P712); “She rose to His Requirement-dropt” (732); “My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun-” (P754); “Title divine-is Mine!” (P1072); “Tell all the Truth but tell it slant-” (P1129)
12. Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

V. 20th Century Literature
1. Conrad, Heart of Darkness
3. Joyce, Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man.
4. Woolf, To the Lighthouse; A Room of One's Own.

**VI. Literary Criticism**

1. Plato, *Republic*, Book X.
2. Aristotle, "Poetics."
3. Horace, "Ars Poetica."
5. Pope, "An Essay on Criticism."
6. Wordsworth, Preface (1802) to *Lyrical Ballads*.
9. James, "The Art of Fiction."
10. Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming."
12. Ransom, "Criticism, Inc."
15. Eagleton, "Marxism and Literary Criticism."

**Supplemental List of Historical and Critical Reading**

The following list of standard works is offered to graduate students for reference in preparing for the Master's Comprehensive Examination; these works will not themselves be the subject of the exam. The list is by no means exhaustive - students should ask course instructors for titles of critical and historical works in specialized areas.

**I. Bibliographies**


**II. Literary Histories**


**III. Criticism and Theory**