American Literature

Reading List for the Comprehensive Examination
Master of Arts in English, Pittsburg State University

You must read all 12 items in the Core List. In consultation with your faculty mentors, also choose 23 more items in the Auxiliary List for a total of 35 items. The comprehensive exam will cover those 35 items. The Graduate Advisor, your two faculty mentors, and you should each keep a photocopy of the list.

Core List (Read all.)

Romantic
3. Dickinson (Johnson edition numbers):
   #49: I never lost as much but twice; #130: These are the days when Birds come back —;
   #249: Wild Nights—Wild Nights!; #258: There’s a certain Slant of Light;
   #280: I felt a Funeral in my Brain; #291: How the old Mountains drip with Sunset;
   #303: The Soul selects her own Society —; #318: I’ll tell you how the sun rose;
   #328: A Bird came down the Walk —; #341: After great pain, a formal feeling comes —;
   #365: Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat?; #465: I heard a Fly buzz — when I died —;
   #501: This World is not Conclusion; #508: I’m ceded — I’ve stopped being Theirs—;
   #569: I reckon — when I count at all; #593: I think I was enchanted;
   #657: I dwell in Possibility —; #670: One need not be a Chamber — to be Haunted—;
   #675: Essential Oils — are wrung —; #754: My Life had stood — a Loaded Gun—;
   #822: This Consciousness that is aware; #986: A Narrow Fellow in the Grass;
   #1129: Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—
Letter 260: To T. W. Higginson, 15 April 1862 [...if my Verse is alive]
Letter 261: To T. W. Higginson, 25 April 1862 [...I had a terror...]
Letter 265: To T. W. Higginson, 7 June 1862 [You think my gait spasmodic...]
Letter 268: To T. W. Higginson, July 1862 [My Business is Circumference...]
Letter 459A: To T. W. Higginson, 1876 [Nature is a Haunted House...]
Letter 233: To [recipient unknown], ca. 1861 [Master letter]
Letter 912: To Susan Gilbert Dickinson, ca. 1884 [Be Sue...]

Realist/Naturalist
4. Melville: Moby-Dick and “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (the first 21 paragraphs).
5. Twain: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

20th Century

Auxiliary List (Choose 23 items as directed.)

13. Native American and Colonial (Check 3 boxes.)
   - Native Songs: “Hunting Song” (Navajo); “Rising of the Buffalo Men” (Osage); “Prayer” (Navajo); “Song in the Garden of the House of God” (Navajo); “Korosta Katzina Song” (Hopi); “You Have No Horses” (Teton Sioux); “I Will Walk” (Chippewa); “From the South” (Chippewa); “Arrow Song” (Chippewa); “Song of War” (Chippewa). (Available at this web page: Native American Oral Tales and Songs <http://members.cox.net/academia/naindex.html>.)
   - Taylor: “Huswifery,” “Upon a Spider Catching a Fly,” “Meditation 8 (First Series),” “Upon Wedlock, and the Death of Children.”
   - Wheatley: “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth,” “To S. M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works.”

   - Native Tales: “The Woman Who Fell from the Sky” (Seneca); “Jicarilla Genesis” (Jicarilla Apache); “Creation” (Hopi); “Great Spirit Names the Animal People: How Coyote Came by His Powers” (Okanogan); “Manabozho and the Hell-Diver” (Menomini); “Origin of Eternal Death” (Wishram). (Available at: Native American Oral Tales and Songs <http://members.cox.net/academia/naindex.html>.)

   - Ashbridge: from Some Account of the Fore-Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge (in Heath Anthology).
   - Edwards: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” and from “Personal Narrative” (first five pages, in Heath Anthology).

   - Rowlandson: from A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (in Norton Anthology, Shorter Edition).

   - Franklin: from The Autobiography: Part I (paragraphs 1-2) and Part II (in Heath Anthology).
   - Equiano: from The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano: Chapter 2 (in Heath Anthology).

14. Transcendentalist Nonfiction 1820-1865 (Check 1 box.)

15. Romantic Period: Short Story (Check 1 box.)

- Melville: “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” “Benito Cereno.”
- Irving: “Rip Van Winkle.”

Poe: “Ligeia.”
Hawthorne: “Rappaccini’s Daughter.”
Melville: “Bartleby, the Scrivener.”
Alcott: “A Whisper in the Dark.”

16. Nineteenth Century Poetry (Check 2 boxes.)

- Dunbar: “Frederick Douglass,” “We Wear the Mask,” “Sympathy.”
- Bryant: “To the Fringed Gentian,” “To a Waterfowl,” “The Death of Abraham Lincoln,” “Thanatopsis,” “The Prairies.”
- Crane: “Black Riders,” “War is Kind,” “A Man Said to the Universe,” “A Man Adrift on a Slim Spar.”
- Whittier: “First-Day Thoughts,” “Ichabod!”

17. Black and Native American Fiction and Non-Fiction (Check 1 box.)

- Douglass: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845 version).
- Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.*
- Wilson: *Our Nig; or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.*
- DuBois: *Souls of Black Folk.*

18/19. Realist/Naturalist Novel (Check 2 boxes.)

- Wharton: *The House of Mirth* or *The Age of Innocence.*
- Crane: *The Red Badge of Courage* and *Maggie, Girl of the Streets.*
20. Realist/Naturalist Period: Short Story (Check 1 box.)
- James: “The Beast in the Jungle.”
- Wharton: “The Other Two.”
- Howells: “Editha.”
- Harte: “The Outcasts of Poker Flat.”
- Austin: “Walking Woman.”
- Crane: “The Open Boat,” “Blue Hotel,” “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.”
- Sui Sin Far: “In the Land of the Free.”
- Gilman: “The Yellow Wall-paper.”
- Freeman: “The Revolt of Mother.”
- Twain: “The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg.”
- Garland: “Under the Lion’s Paw.”
- Jewett: “A White Heron.”
- Chopin: “At the ‘Cadian Ball,” “The Storm.”
- Cable: “Poquelin.”
- G. W. Harris: “Mrs. Yardley’s Quilting.”
- J. C. Harris: “Free Joe.”

21/22. Modernist Novel and Autobiography (Check 2 boxes.)
- Anderson: Winesburg, Ohio.
- Hemingway: The Sun Also Rises or In Our Time or A Farewell to Arms.
- Hurston: Their Eyes Were Watching God.
- Fitzgerald: The Great Gatsby.
- Wright: Native Son.
- Cather: A Lost Lady.
- Steinbeck: The Grapes of Wrath.
- Neihardt: Black Elk Speaks.
- Larson: Quicksand.

23/24/25. Modernist Poetry (Check 3 boxes.)
- Williams: (Poems) “Spring and All,” “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,” “Danse Russe,” “The Red Wheelbarrow,” This Is Just to Say,” “The Young Housewife,” “Portrait of a Lady,” “Queen Anne’s Lace,” “The Widow’s Lament in Springtime,” “The Great Figure,” “At the Ball Game,” “The Dance,” “The Ivy Crown,” “Yachts,” “To Elsie.” (Theory) “Projective Verse and the Practice,” “A New Measure.”


- **Pound:** (Poems) “In a Station of the Metro,” “The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter,” “A Pact.” (Theory) “A Retrospect,” “Affirmations.”

- **Millay:** “Recuerdo,” “Love Is Not All; It Is Not Meat Nor Drink.”


- **Amy Lowell:** “Patterns,” “The Sisters.”


- **cummings:** “Buffalo Bill’s,” “next to of course god america I,” “anyone lived in a pretty how town.”

- **Cullen:** “Incident,” “Yet Do I Marvel.”

- **McKay:** “The Harlem Dancer,” “America,” “If We Must Die,” “Harlem Shadows.”

- **Stein:** “Patriarchal Poetry” (selections in Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature).

### 26/27. Twentieth Century Short Story (Read O’Connor and check 1 other box.)

- **O’Connor:** “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” “Good Country People,” “The Artificial Nigger,” “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” “Revelation,” “The Displaced Person.”

- **Hemingway:** “The Snows of Kilimanjaro.” **Carver:** “Cathedral.” **Bambara:** “The Lesson.” **Mason:** “Shi-loh.” **Cheever:** “The Swimmer.” **Malamud:** “The Magic Barrel.”

- **Paley:** “A Conversation with My Father.” **Hemingway:** “A Clean Well-Lighted Place.” **Welty:** “Why I Live at the P. O.” **Erdrich:** “Fleur.” **LeGuin:** “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.” **Baldwin:** “Sonny’s Blues.”

- **Ford:** “Rock Springs.” **Hurston:** “Sweat.” **J. Williams:** “Taking Care.” **Walker:** “Everyday Use.” **Adams:** “Barcelona.” **Barthelme:** “Sentence.”

- **Olsen:** “I Stand Here Ironing.” **Porter:** “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.” **Barth:** “Lost in the Fun-house.” **Mukherjee:** “A Wife’s Story.” **O’Brien:** “The Things They Carried.” **Updike:** “‘A&P.’”

- **Faulkner:** “Barn Burning.” **Toomer:** “Blood-Burning Moon 1, 2, 3” (from Cane). **Hemingway:** “Hills Like White Elephants.” **Silko:** “Lullaby.” **Boyle:** “Greasy Lake.” **Vizenor:** “Feral Lasers.”
28/29. Contemporary/Post-Modernist Novel since 1945 (Check 1 box in Group A and 1 box in Group B.)

**Group A.**
- **Kingston:** The Woman Warrior.
- **Momaday:** House Made of Dawn and The Way to Rainy Mountain.
- **Silko:** Ceremony.

**Group B.**
- **Alvarez:** How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents.
- **Bellow:** Henderson the Rain King.
- **Erdriech:** Tracks.
- **Irving:** The World According to Garp or Cider House Rules.
- **C. Johnson:** Middle Passage.
- **Kennedy:** Ironweed.
- **Morrison:** The Bluest Eye or Beloved.
- **Mukherjee:** Jasmine.
- **Nabokov:** Lolita or Pale Fire.
- **Pynchon:** The Crying of Lot 49.
- **Smiley:** A Thousand Acres.
- **Updike:** Rabbit, Run or Rabbit Redux or Rabbit is Rich or Rabbit at Rest.
- **Vonnegut:** Slaughterhouse-Five or Breakfast of Champions.

30/31/32. Contemporary Poetry since 1945 (Check at least 1 box in Group A and 2 more in A or B.)

**Group A.**


- **Hayden:** “Those Winter Sundays,” “Mourning Poem for the Queen of Sunday,” “A Plague of Starlings,” “For a Young Artist,” “A Letter from Phillis Wheatley,” “The Ballad of Sue Ellen Westerfield,” “Monet’s Waterlilies,” “Bone-Flower Elegy,” “Night, Death, Mississippi,” “O Daedalus, Fly Away Home.”


- **Wilbur:** “Love Calls Us to the Things of This World,” “The Writer,” “A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the Villa Sciarra,” “Advice to a Prophet,” “Mayflies,” “The Pardon.”

Ginsberg: “Howl,” “America,” “A Supermarket in California,” “Love Poem on Theme by Whitman.”

Group B.

Oliver: “The Humpbacks,” “Happiness,” “Black Snake This Time.”


Clifton: “miss rosie,” “wishes for sons,” “homage to my hips,” “at the cemetery, walnut grove plantation, south carolina, 1989,” “i was born with twelve fingers,” “at last we killed the roaches,” “scar,” “lorena,” “the times,” “shapeshifter poems.”
S. Ortiz: “My Father’s Song,” “Earth and Rain, the Plants & Sun.”

Wright: “A Blessing,” “Autumn Begins at Martin’s Ferry, Ohio,” “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota,” “Saint Judas,” “Beautiful Ohio.”
Harjo: “She Had Some Horses.”
Baraka: “An Agony. As Now,” “Ka’Ba,” “The Dead Lady Canonized,” “Poem for Halfwhite College Students.”

Hall: “Names of Horses,” “My Son, My Executioner,” “Maple Syrup.”

Weigl: “Song of Napalm,” “Burning Shit at An Khe,” “Snowy Egret.”
Hirsch: “For the Sleepwalkers,” “Omen,” “Wild Gratitude.”


33/34/35. 20th Century Drama (Check at least 2 boxes in Group A and 1 more in A or B.)

Group A.
☐ Hansberry: A Raisin in the Sun.
☐ Miller: Death of a Salesman.
☐ T. Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire.
☐ Wilson: The Piano Lesson or Joe Turner’s Come and Gone or Fences

Group B.
☐ Albee: Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? or The Zoo Story and The American Dream
☐ Hellman: The Children’s Hour.
☐ Hwang: M. Butterfly.
☐ Shange: Spell #7 or for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf.
☐ Shepard: Fool for Love or True West.
☐ Wilder: The Skin of Our Teeth.