

## Reading List: English Literature

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Students must take an **oral examination on a book from the list below** in both form 5 and 6. Equal weight will be given to quality of language and quality of content in the marking of the oral examination. **Quality of language** includes pronunciation, intonation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary and appropriateness of register. **Quality of content** includes thorough knowledge of the text, i.e. plot, characters and their development/relationships, setting, symbols/motifs and themes. Please note that some texts are shorter and easier than others; this will be taken into consideration when marking your oral.

If you would like to take your oral on a text other than those in the list below, please contact me to make your suggestion. Make sure it gives the opportunity to discuss matters of intellectual substance and interest.

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### **Anonymous. *Beowulf*, ca. 675-1000.**

The Old English poem *Beowulf* follows Beowulf from heroic youth to heroic old age. He saves a neighbouring people from a monster, Grendel, eventually becomes the king of his own people, and dies defending them from a dragon. It is a great adventure story, and a deeply philosophical one.

(Prose Translation by E. Talbot Donaldson)

Donaldson, E. Talbot. *Beowulf*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1966.  
ISBN 978-0-39-309687-3, 205 pages, ca. CHF 18.00

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### **Anonymous. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ca. 1375.**

A New Year's feast at King Arthur's court is interrupted by the appearance of a gigantic Green Knight, resplendent on horseback. He challenges any one of Arthur's men to behead him, provided that if he survives he can return the blow a year later. Sir Gawain accepts the challenge and decapitates the knight but the mysterious warrior cheats death and vanishes, bearing his head with him. The following winter Gawain sets out to find the Knight in the wild Northern lands and to keep his side of the bargain.

(Translated by J. A. Burrow)

Burrow, J. A. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. London: Penguin, 2005.  
ISBN 978-0-14-042295-5, 176 pages, CHF 16.90

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### **Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719.**

Robinson Crusoe's seafaring adventures are abruptly ended when he is shipwrecked, the solitary survivor on a deserted island. He gradually creates a life for himself, building a house, cultivating the land, and making a companion from the native whose life he saves.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. New York: Modern Library, 2001.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75732-7, 320 pages, CHF 10.50

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### **Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764.**

On the day of his wedding, Conrad, heir to the house of Otranto, is killed under mysterious circumstances. His calculating father, Manfred, fears that his dynasty will now come to an end and determines to marry his son's bride himself, despite the fact he is already married. But a series of terrifying supernatural omens soon threaten this unlawful union, as the curse placed on Manfred's ancestor, who usurped the lawful Prince of Otranto, begins to unfold.

Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. London: Penguin, 2002.  
ISBN 978-0-14-043767-6, 208 pages, CHF 11.90

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### **Austen, Jane. *Emma*, 1816.**

Confident that she knows best, Emma schemes to find a suitable husband for her pliant friend Harriet, only to discover that she understands the feelings of others as little as she does her own heart.

Austen, Jane. *Emma*. New York: Modern Library, 2001.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75742-6, 384 pages, CHF 10.50

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**Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*, 1818.**

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*Northanger Abbey* is about the misadventures of Catherine Morland, young, ingenuous, and mettlesome, and an indefatigable reader of gothic novels. Their romantic excess and dark overstatement feed her imagination, as tyrannical fathers and diabolical villains work their evil on forlorn heroines in isolated settings.

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75917-8, 222 pages, CHF 9.50

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**Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*, 1818.**

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*Frankenstein* was Mary Shelley's immensely powerful contribution to the ghost stories which she, Percy Shelley, and Byron wrote one wet summer in Switzerland. Its protagonist is a young student of natural philosophy, who learns the secret of imparting life to a creature constructed from relics of the dead, with horrific consequences.

Shelley Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Modern Library, 1999.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75341-1, 352 pages, CHF 10.50

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**Brontë, Anne. *Agnes Grey*, 1847.**

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The novel tells the story of Agnes Grey, the daughter of a minister, whose family comes to financial ruin. Desperate to earn the money to care for herself, she takes one of the few jobs allowed to respectable women in the early Victorian era—the role of governess to the children of the wealthy.

Brontë, Anne. *Agnes Grey*. New York: Modern Library, 1999.  
ISBN 978-0-8129-6713-5, 240 pages, CHF 11.90

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**Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, 1847.**

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This romantic novel is about an orphaned young girl, who goes on to become a governess and teacher. She eventually finds love and a home for herself.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. New York: Modern Library, 2000.  
ISBN 978-0-679-78332-9, 752 pages, CHF 10.50

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**Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*, 1847.**

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The story—as turbulent as its title suggests—transports the reader to the North Yorkshire moors to witness the drama of the Earnshaws and the Lintons, and the volatile, yet spiritual, relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Wuthering Heights*. New York: Modern Library, 2000.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75644-3, 464 pages, CHF 9.50

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**Ballantyne, Robert Michael. *The Coral Island*, 1857.**

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When the three sailor lads, Ralph, Jack and Peterkin are cast ashore after the storm, their first task is to find out whether the island is inhabited. Their next task is to find a way of staying alive. They go hunting and learn to fish, explore underwater caves and build boats - but then their island paradise is rudely disturbed by the arrival of pirates.

Ballantyne, Robert Michael. *The Coral Island*. London: Puffin, 1994.  
ISBN 978-0-14-036761-4, 304 pages, CHF 6.90

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**Eliot, George. *Silas Marner*, 1861.**

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In *Silas Marner*, an embittered man retreats from the outside world, thinking only of work and money. Then his wealth is stolen, and a young foundling comes into his life and changes everything. George Eliot combines humour and rich symbolism with a historically precise setting to create an extraordinary tale of love and hope.

Eliot George. *Silas Marner*. New York: Modern Library, 2001.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75749-5, 240 pages, CHF 10.50

**Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865.**

On an ordinary summer's afternoon, Alice tumbles down a hole and an extraordinary adventure begins. In a strange world with even stranger characters, she meets a rabbit with a pocket watch, joins a Mad Hatter's Tea Party, and plays croquet with the Queen! Lost in this fantasy land, Alice finds herself growing more and more curious by the minute...

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Puffin, 2008.  
ISBN 978-0-14-132107-3, 145 pages, CHF 13.90

**James, Henry. *Daisy Miller*, 1878.**

Travelling in Europe with her family, Daisy Miller, an exquisitely beautiful young American woman, presents her fellow-countryman Winterbourne with a dilemma he cannot resolve. Is she deliberately flouting social convention in the outspoken way she talks and acts, or is she simply ignorant of those conventions?

James, Henry. *Daisy Miller*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75966-6, 112 pages, CHF 9.50

**Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*, 1883.**

Young Jim Hawkins has discovered a map that will lead him to the fabled Treasure Island. But a host of villains, wild beasts and deadly savages stand between him and the stash of gold. Not to mention the most infamous pirate ever to sail the high seas...

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. London: Puffin, 2008.  
ISBN 978-0-14-132100-4, 302 pages, CHF 13.50

**Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1890.**

This story is about a fashionable young man who attains eternal youth while only his portrait grows old, hidden away in a locked room.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. New York: Modern Library, 1998.  
ISBN 978-0-375-75151-6, 304 pages, CHF 10.50

**Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*, 1898.**

A dreamer obsessed with travelling through time builds himself a time machine and, much to his surprise, travels over 800,000 years into the future. The world has been transformed with a society living in apparent harmony and bliss, but as the Traveller stays in this world of the future he discovers a hidden barbaric and depraved subterranean class. Wells's translucent commentary on the capitalist society was an instant bestseller and launched the time-travel genre.

Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine: An Invention*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.  
ISBN 978-0-375-76118-8, 136 pages, CHF 11.90

**Barrie, James Matthew. *Peter Pan*, 1911.**

The adventures of the three Darling children in Never-Never Land with Peter Pan, "the boy who would not grow up".

Barrie, James Matthew. *Peter Pan*. London: Penguin, 2008.  
ISBN 978-0-14-132257-5, 206 pages, CHF 13.50

**Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*, 1911.**

After the death of her parents, Mary is brought back from India as a forlorn and unwanted child, to live in her uncle's great lonely house on the moors. Then one day she discovers the key to a secret garden and, like magic, her life begins to brighten in so many ways.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. London: Penguin, 2008.  
ISBN 978-0-14-132106-6, 340 pages, CHF 15.90

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**Wharton, Edith. *Ethan Frome*, 1911.**

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Ethan Frome works his unproductive farm and struggles to maintain a bearable existence with his difficult, suspicious, and hypochondriac wife, Zeenie. But when Zeenie's vivacious cousin enters their household as a hired girl, Ethan finds himself obsessed with her and with the possibilities for happiness she comes to represent.

Wharton, Edith. *Ethan Frome*. London: Penguin, 2005.  
ISBN 978-0-14-243780-3, 99 pages, CHF 10.90

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**Joyce, James. *Dubliners*, 1914.**

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In these masterful stories, steeped in realism, Joyce creates an exacting portrait of his native city, showing how it reflects the general decline of Irish culture and civilization.

(A selection of ca. five short stories including *Araby*, *Evelyne*, *The Boarding House* and *The Dead*)

Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. London: Penguin, 2000.  
ISBN 978-0-14-118245-2, 316 pages, CHF 12.90

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**Fitzgerald, Francis Scott. *The Great Gatsby*, 1925.**

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Set in the 1920's, the novel explores the reality of the American Dream in the Jazz age.

Fitzgerald, Francis Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. London: Penguin, 2000.  
ISBN 978-0-14-118263-6, 176 pages, CHF 12.90

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**Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*, 1932.**

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Set in London in the 26<sup>th</sup> century, the novel anticipates developments in reproductive technology, eugenics and hypnopaedia that combine to change society. The world it describes could in fact also be a utopia, albeit an ironic one: Humanity is carefree, healthy, and technologically advanced. Warfare and poverty have been eliminated, all races are equal, and everyone is permanently happy. The irony is, however, that all of these things have been achieved by eliminating many things—family, cultural diversity, art, literature, religion and philosophy.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. London: Vintage, 2004.  
ISBN 978-0-09-947746-4, 229 pages, CHF 16.90

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**Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*, 1937.**

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Streetwise George and his childlike friend Lennie are drifters, searching for work in the fields and valleys of California. They have nothing except the clothes on their back, and a hope that one day they'll find a place of their own and live the American Dream. But do dreams come at a price!

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. London: Penguin, 2006.  
ISBN 978-0-14-102357-1, 128 pages, CHF 16.90

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**Salinger, Jerome David. *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951.**

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Holden Caulfield, a teenager growing up in 1950s New York, has been expelled school for poor achievement once again. In an attempt to deal with this he leaves school a few days prior to the end of term, and goes to New York to 'take a vacation' before returning to his parents' inevitable wrath.

Salinger, Jerome David. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Hachette Books, 2001.  
ISBN 978-0-316-76917-4, 288 pages, CHF 19.50

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**Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*, 1952.**

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Set in the Gulf Stream off the coast of Havana, Hemingway's magnificent fable is the tale of an old man, a young boy and a giant fish. This story of heroic endeavour won Hemingway the Nobel Prize for Literature. It stands as a unique and timeless vision of the beauty and grief of man's challenge to the elements.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*. London: Vintage, 2007.  
ISBN 978-0-09-927396-7, 112 pages, CHF 15.90

**Boston, Lucy Maria. *The Children of Green Knowe*, 1954.**

As young Toseland goes to live with his grandmother in the family's ancestral home, the reader is plunged immediately into the world of Green Knowe. Like Toseland, who actually rows up to his new home in the midst of a flood, we have a hard time finding our bearings. Toseland discovers a funny kind of grandmother awaiting him—one who speaks elliptically of the children and animals she keeps around the house: they might be memories, they might be ghosts. It's never quite clear where real life leaves off and magic begins.

Boston, Lucy Maria. *The Children of Green Knowe*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006.  
ISBN 978-0-571-23146-1, 128 pages, CHF 16.50

**Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*, 1954.**

Golding's best-known novel is the story of a group of boys who, after a plane crash, set up a fragile community on a previously uninhabited island. A masterpiece, going into the question of human nature as such.

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.  
ISBN 978-0-571-05686-6, 288 pages, CHF 19.50

**Lewis, Clive Staples. *The Magician's Nephew*, 1955.**

Digory and Polly find themselves magically transported to a Wood between the Worlds, where several small ponds act as gateways to different worlds. They discover the dead world of Charn and together with Aslan the lion the pair fight against the evil Queen Jadis, restoring the land to its natural state and triumphing over the darkness that reigned before their arrival.

Lewis, Clive Staples. *The Magician's Nephew*. London: Harper Collins, 2000.  
ISBN 978-0-00-671683-9, 188 pages, CHF 15.90

**Spark, Muriel. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, 1961.**

Romantic, heroic, comic and tragic, unconventional schoolmistress Jean Brodie has become an iconic figure in post-war fiction. Her glamour, freethinking ideas and manipulative charm hold dangerous sway over her girls at the Marcia Blaine Academy—the “crème de la crème” —who become the Brodie Set, introduced to a privileged world of adult games that they will never forget.

Spark, Muriel. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. London: Penguin, 2000.  
ISBN 978-0-14-118142-4, 144 pages, CHF 20.90

**Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*, 1963.**

Esther, an A-student from Boston who has won a guest editorship on a national magazine, finds a bewildering new world at her feet. Her New York life is crowded with possibilities, so that the choice of future is overwhelming, but she can no longer retreat into the safety of her past. Deciding she wants to be a writer above all else, Esther is also struggling with the perennial problems of morality, behaviour and identity. In this compelling autobiographical novel, a milestone in contemporary literature, Sylvia Plath chronicles her teenage years—her disappointments, anger, depression and eventual breakdown and treatment—with stunning wit and devastating honesty.

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.  
ISBN 978-0-571-22616-0, 234 pages, CHF 18.50

**Frayn, Michael. *A Very Private Life*, 1968.**

A dystopian novel set in the distant future. Frayn's inquisitive heroine is smitten by love and fuelled by angst and seeks to break free of her enclosed community.

Frayn, Michael. *A Very Private Life*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.  
ISBN 978-0-571-22506-4, 160 pages, CHF 18.50

**McEwan, Ian. *The Cement Garden*, 1978.**

In this tour de force of psychological unease McEwan excavates the ruins of childhood and uncovers things that most adults have spent a lifetime forgetting—or denying. “Possesses the suspense and chilling impact of *Lord of the Flies*.”—Washington Post Book World.

McEwan, Ian. *The Cement Garden*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006.  
ISBN 978-0-09-975511-1, 138 pages, CHF 15.90

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**Gunn, Kirsty. *Rain*, 1994.**

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Janey and her younger brother, Jim Little, are the children of alcoholic parents in England. Janey serves as a surrogate mother to Jim, since their mother has become too concerned with cocktails to be able to do much nurturing; she tries to protect the frail boy, who seems to suffer more than she from the unparented life they lead amidst the clinking of glasses and the tinkling of late-night drunken laughter.

Gunn, Kirsty. *Rain*. London: Faber and Faber, 1994.  
ISBN 978-0-571-17300-6, 138 pages, CHF 18.50

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**Kilroy, Claire. *All Summer*, 2003.**

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Unsettling psychological thriller following the exploits of a woman who has lost her memory but knows she has some connection to a crime.

Kilroy, Claire. *All Summer*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.  
ISBN 978-0-571-21563-8, 237 pages, CHF 20.90

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**Seiffert, Rachel. *Afterwards*, 2007.**

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Almost a decade has passed since Joseph, then a soldier, killed a suspected IRA terrorist at a military checkpoint. The incident haunts him, sometimes makes him violent and prevents him from forming serious attachments. Alice resents that Joseph is essentially shutting her out of his life. Alice tenuously cares for her grandfather, David, whose emotional remoteness may be linked to his stint with the RAF in 1950s Kenya. When Joseph good-naturedly offers to do some free decorating at David's house, an easy rapport develops between the two reticent men, until things go wrong.

Seiffert, Rachel. *Afterwards*. London: Vintage, 2007.  
ISBN 978-0-09-946177-7, 327 pages, CHF 15.90