



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

School  
Of  
English.



**Preparing for my degree:**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

# What can I do over the summer to prepare for my degree?

We're looking forward to welcoming you to the School of English in September! Below are some suggestions about how you might begin to get into gear for your degree. We don't expect you to attempt to do even half of everything listed here: do take time to relax and recharge over the summer so that you arrive ready to make the most of your time with us.

We have some recommendations relating to both the language and literature parts of your course. Note that in the first semester, the compulsory modules treat the two areas (language and literature) separately, but after that you will also be taking modules that integrate them. Don't worry if the list seems long. The most important material is listed under the heading 'Core Reading', while the section under 'Further Reading' provides suggestions for things to look at if you want to dig a bit deeper. If you had a good go at the things in the 'Core Reading' section and maybe a few things from the 'Further Reading' section, you would be preparing yourself thoroughly for the course.

1. [Core reading for English Language modules](#)
2. [Core reading for English Literature modules](#)
3. [Further reading on language](#)
4. [Further reading on literature](#)

## 1. Core reading for English Language modules

In the first semester, you will study some of the basic building blocks of language (its sounds and structures) and you will have the option of learning about how language changes over time and place.

**Here are the set texts we will be using for the compulsory English Language modules:**

### Autumn Semester

#### **ELL112 Sounds of English**

- Carr, P. (2020). *English Phonetics and Phonology: An Introduction (3rd ed.)*. Wiley Blackwell.  
(This book is available via the University Library as an eBook.)

#### **ELL113 Structures of English**

- Sportiche, D., Koopman, H., & Stabler, E. (2013). *An introduction to syntactic analysis and theory*. Wiley Blackwell.

### Spring Semester

Finally, yet importantly, in Semester 2 of your first year, you will take a compulsory module that brings the study of language and literature together, and it covers linguistic techniques for analysing texts – the kind of thing you might have done at A-level but more advanced. The set text for that module is:

#### **EGH102 Exploring Literary Language**

- Simpson, Paul (2004) *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge [ISBN: 0415281059]

**You may also choose to study additional English Language modules, each with their own set texts:**

**ELL110 Varieties of English** (Autumn semester)

- Beal, Joan (2010) *An Introduction to Regional Englishes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. [ISBN: 0748621172]

**ELL114 History of English** (Spring semester)

- van Gelderen, Elly (2014) *A History of the English Language*, Revised edition. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. (Make sure to get the revised edition!)

## **2. Core reading for English Literature modules**

Let us turn now to literature. In addition to the optional modules you choose, in your first year you will all take **LIT120 Renaissance to Revolution** as your core module. This module, which introduces you to English Literature from the early sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries, runs across the Autumn and Spring semesters.

**Below is a list of the texts, all from the anthology or above-mentioned texts, that we'll be studying on LIT120 across the two semesters.**

If you want to make a start on your reading before you arrive, we'd usually recommend looking for copies in your local library, or on friends' and relatives' bookshelves. Fortunately, many of the texts are also available via open access web resources such as [Luminarium](https://luminarium.org). Bear in mind that these online texts don't come with supporting material such as explanatory annotations, and some of them are in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spelling, rather than the modernised texts we'll use. We don't study *all* the poems by Wyatt, Donne, etc., so just have a browse.

**Below is a list of authors from this rich period that you'll read in your first year:**

### Autumn Semester

- Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*
- Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, *The Roaring Girl*
- John Donne, selected poems
- Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*
- Aemelia Lanyer, 'The Description of Cookeham' from *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*
- Philip Sidney, extracts from *Astrophil and Stella*
- Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*
- John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*
- Mary Wroth extracts from 'Pamphilia to Amphilanthus'
- Thomas Wyatt, selected poems

### Spring Semester

- Aphra Behn, *Oronooko*
- Frances Burney, *Evelina*
- Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*
- Thomas Gray, 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard'
- Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*
- Andrew Marvell, selected poems, including 'An Horatian Ode'
- John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 1, 2, 4, 9
- Alexander Pope, *Rape of the Lock* (1712 edn; 2 cantos)
- William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*



### 3. Further reading on language

If you get through the basic reading recommended above, you might want ideas to take you further. If so, here they are! In the language components of the course, you will often hear people talking about ‘linguistics’, the technical study of how languages work. For many of you, this may be the first time you have studied linguistics, especially if you didn’t take English Language at A level, so the summer before you arrive is an ideal time to explore what linguistics is about. The following books are designed to provide an introductory overview of linguistics and have been written by some of the leading figures in the field.

These books will not be assigned as obligatory set texts for your modules, so you shouldn’t rush out and buy them all. However, if you can get hold of at least some of them, we are confident they will provide an accessible and enjoyable insight into the kinds of things you will study as part of a degree that includes language and linguistics. We have indicated below each one what we think it has to offer.

- Beal, Joan (2006) *Language and Region*. London: Routledge

This provides a very accessible guide to the study of variation in British Englishes (it’s aimed at A level students) and provides a gentle introduction to topics covered in the module **ELL110 Varieties of English**.

- Crystal, D (2008) *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 5th Edition. London: Blackwell

This is a very general, but very comprehensive overview of contemporary linguistics. It is useful as a reference book to look up unfamiliar concepts or areas of study, as well as a guide to further reading. It is richly illustrated and written in a very accessible and engaging style by one of the UK’s most famous linguists. Highly recommended.

- Fromkin, Victoria., Rodman, Robert., & Hyams, Nina. (2013). *An introduction to language* (10th Edition). Cengage Learning.

This is a great overview of linguistics with chapters on all areas that you’ll study at Level 1 and beyond. You’ll find it very useful as supplementary reading for **ELL112 Sounds of English** and **ELL113 Structures of English** in your first year, and then find it gives you a useful overview of other topics you’ll study in more advanced modules in Level 2 and 3.

- Harley, Trevor A. (2010). *Talking the Talk: Language, Psychology and Science*. Hove & New York: Psychology Press.

This provides a lively and accessible overview of some of the key topics in linguistics, covering the uniqueness of human language, its structure, acquisition, geographical and social variation, patterns of everyday usage, and its place in contemporary social debates.

- Yule, G. (2010) *The Study of Language*, 4th Edition. London: Routledge

Now in its fourth edition, this popular introductory text offers a very accessible overview of key topics in linguistics. It covers the origins of language and the distinctiveness of human versus animal communication. It provides a very digestible yet detailed introduction to the sounds of language – how they are produced and how they form meaning. It provides a similar overview of key aspects of grammar and word meaning, as well as the way speakers make use of context to create and interpret meaning. The book also provides a solid introduction to sociolinguistics (the study of language variation and change). Highly recommended introductory text.

## 4. Further reading on literature

One of the biggest challenges involved in reading English Literature at university is getting up to speed with the mythological, generic, and religious contexts that literary works past and present draw upon. You can be sure that the degree at Sheffield will give you knowledge and understanding of literature from the Renaissance to the present day, but our focus will naturally be on the texts studied on each course. We will always encourage you to read around these texts, but there might not always be time during the semester to absorb all the cultural sources that underlie them. The summer before you arrive is an ideal time to look to fill some of the gaps in your knowledge, and to read works from periods that you may not know from school or from your own reading. You do not need to buy these books if you do not want to; your local library will be very happy to see you.

### Sample some of the following:

- Classical literature in translation, e.g., Books 4 and/or 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, a book or two of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; some of Homer's *Odyssey*
- A book or two of the Bible (King James translation recommended), e.g., Genesis, Song of Songs, one of the books of the New Testament (e.g., Gospel according to John, Mark, Matthew, or Luke; the Acts of the Apostles)
- Some medieval literature (e.g., some of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, such as Book 1, on the birth and rise of Arthur, 'Tristan and Iseult', or 'Lancelot and Guinevere')
- If you can, go to the theatre to watch some Renaissance or Restoration drama
- Read an early novel and compare it with a version on TV or film

The degree programme at Sheffield also gives you the opportunity to study film. This begins in Semester 2 with **LIT181 Introduction to Film**. See what you think of the BBC's list of [the twenty-first-century's best films](#).

### If you've not seen them before, check out:

- *Memento* (2000)
- *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001)
- *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006)
- *Fish Tank* (2009)
- *Coriolanus* (2011)
- *Wuthering Heights* (2011)
- *Mad Max Fury Road* (2014)
- *Victoria* (2015)
- *Lady Bird* (2017)

**Have a wonderful summer, and we'll see you in September!**