Medieval Literature

Field of Study Reading List

Note: where editions are not mentioned, the texts are widely available in anthologies or in various scholarly editions, among which the candidate may choose with guidance from supervisor or area experts. In addition to the primary texts, candidates are responsible for knowing the current critical contexts of those texts. Asterisked items must be part of any candidacy list modified from this one.

A student preparing this list for a field exam is expected to read all items in the original language. A student preparing this list for a minor field exam may read Old English and Early Middle English items in translation, but is also expected to read excerpts (to be set in consultation with supervisor and area experts) of the Old English and Early Middle English items in the original language; for a minor field exam, all Later Middle English items are to be read in the original language.

Old English:


2. *The Wanderer*

3. *The Seafarer*

4. *The Dream of the Rood*


Exeter Book editions of Gollancz, Krapp and Dobbie, or Muir; anthologies; or Methuen individual editions of most of these poems.

6. Either Judith or Juliana.

7. *The Battle of Maldon*

8. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, at least entries from 755 - 878.

9. *Wulfstan, Sermo lupi ad anglos*

10. Aelfric: at least three homilies from the Catholic Homilies or at least three saints’ lives from the Lives of Saints or a combination. Editions of Skeat for Lives, Godden for Catholic Homilies.

11. *A selection of Aelfredian and Aelfrician prefaces, such as those anthologized in the Mitchell and Robinson Guide to Old English.*

Early Middle English:

1. Ancrene Wisse

2. Hali Meiðhad

3. *The Owl and the Nightingale*

4. King Horn or Havelok

5. Sir Orfeo

The Vox and the Wolf, Dame Sirith, and Interludium de Clerico et Puella
Later Middle English:

5. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Tolkien, Gordon and Davis; Andrew and Waldron; or Vantuono.
7. Three of *Sir Launfal, Ywain and Gawain*, the alliterative *Morte Arthur*, the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*
8. *Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe*
10. Richard Rolle *English Writings*.
11. *St. Erkenwald*.
12. At least twelve lyrics such as those from MS Harley 2253 or Cambridge University Library Ff. I.6 (Findern MS)
13. *Malory, Le Morte D'Arthur* ed. Caxton (various modern-spelling editions available, such as Penguin) or *Works* ed. Vinaver
15. *The Towneley Cycle* or the *York Cycle* of mystery plays.
16. *Everyman, Mankind* and *The Castle of Perseverance*. 