

Reading list for post-A-level Russian first-year students

It is important to spend some time between now and the beginning of the course in October to prepare for the work you will be doing in Oxford. The Preliminary Examination, which is held at the end of the first year, is a tough examination, and it is vital that you should keep your Russian language up in the meantime. One obvious way of doing this is to start on some of the reading of the literature texts set for the course (see below); otherwise, take every opportunity you can find to talk and hear Russian.

You will also need to make sure that your grammar is up to scratch, for example that you know your regular and irregular declensions and conjugations off by heart. It would be a good idea to buy the handy paperback called *Oxford Russian Verbs and Grammar*, and learn all the tables in that book. I would also recommend that you acquire the following, as you will find these essential both now and during your course:

Terence Wade's *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, 2020), (there is an accompanying *Workbook*);
Derek Offord's *Modern Russian - An Advanced Grammar Course* (Bristol Classical Press, London, originally 1993).

You should also have your own copy of a good Russian-English and English-Russian dictionary.

The Preliminary Examination tests your language skills, and also requires that you should read (in Russian) and be able to comment in close detail on works by seven Russian authors. Roughly in order of difficulty, starting with the easiest, the set texts at present are as follows:

- 1) Chekhov's stories: *Случай из практики*, *Анна на шее* and *Дом с мезонином* (annotated texts available in A.P. Chekhov, *Selected Short Stories*, Bristol Classical Press).
- 2) Pushkin's story: *Пиковая дама* (also available in an annotated BCP edition).
- 3) Pushkin's poem *Медный всадник* (also available in an annotated BCP edition).
- 4) Lermontov's poem *Мцыри* (available in anthologies and collections of his works).
- 5) Akhmatova's poem *Реквием* (available in anthologies/collections of her works).
- 6) Blok's poems: *На поле куликовом* and *Двенадцать* in *Selected Poems*, edited by James Woodward (available in an annotated BCP edition).
- 7) Dovlatov's short novel *Чемодан* (publ. Azbuka).
- 8) Derzhavin's poem *Фелица* (available from the ML Faculty Office when you arrive).

The editions in the Bristol Classical Press Series have useful introductions and glossaries. They are now available through Bloomsbury Academic.

I would like you to have read *at least* the stories by Chekhov and Pushkin before you come up, but it would be wise to read more, since you will have limited time for reading in term time. You may find it necessary to keep an English translation to hand so that the work is not too laborious, but it is essential that you get to know all the texts in Russian as you will be asked to translate and comment on passages in the original in the examination. The course in Oxford is very intensive, and vacations always need to be used for preparatory reading in this way.

Please get in touch with me if you have any queries, my e-mail address is hanne.eckhoff@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk.

I look forward to seeing you in October!

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Suggestions for further reading in 19th- and 20th-century Russian literature

Which of these have you not read? This list may prove useful throughout your time at Oxford. It should be possible to obtain most of the following, in English at least, from your local Public Library or bookshops. Getting to know some of these authors will help you to make choices about options in due course. Happy browsing!

19th-century authors:

- PUSHKIN: any of the prose works (e.g. *The Captain's Daughter* and *The Tales of Belkin*), and a selection of his lyric poetry such as might be found in any bilingual anthology such as *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse*.
- LERMONTOV: the novel *A Hero of Our Time*, plus a selection of his lyric poetry - see an anthology, as above under PUSHKIN.
- GOGOL: the 'Petersburg Tales', including *The Overcoat*, *Nevsky Prospect*, *The Nose*, and *Diary of a Madman*; also his play *The Government Inspector*, and his novel *Dead Souls*.
- DOSTOEVSKY: the four great novels - *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Idiot*, and *The Possessed (The Devils)*, as well as his shorter novel *Notes from Underground*.
- GONCHAROV: the novel *Oblomov*.
- TOLSTOY: his autobiographical *Childhood and Youth*; the story *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*; and the two great novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.
- TURGENEV: the novel *Fathers and Sons*, and the *Huntsman's Sketches*.
- CHEKHOV: any selection of short stories, and the four major plays - *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*.

20th-century authors:

- AKHMATOVA, MANDELSHTAM and TSVETAeva; and, more recently, BRODSKY: any bilingual anthologies of the works of these poets.
- ZAMYATIN: the novel *We*, and any of his short stories.
- ZOSHCHENKO: any of his short stories, especially of the 1920s.
- BABEL: his cycle of short stories *Red Cavalry*.
- BULGAKOV: his novels *The White Guard* and *The Master and Margarita*, as well as *The Heart of a Dog* and his play *Flight*.
- GROSSMAN Vasily: his epic novel of WWII, *Life and Fate*.
- PASTERNAK: *Doctor Zhivago*, and any bilingual anthology of his poetry.
- VOINOVICH: the two-part novel about Private Chonkin.
- VLADIMOV: his short novel *Faithful Ruslan*.
- SOLZHENITSYN: the short novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and his two longer novels *Cancer Ward* and *The First Circle*.

Selected introductory works on 19th- and 20th-century Russian history

It is difficult to appreciate Russian literature without having some knowledge of Russian history. You should try to look at least at a couple of the following, which should be available in your Public Library or in paperback:

- D. Saunders: *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform - 1801-1881*
- L. Kochan: *Russia in Revolution - 1890-1918*
- J. Westwood: *Endurance and Endeavour - Russian History 1812-1971*
- G. Hosking: *A History of the Soviet Union*
- P. Dukes, *A History of Russia c.882-1996*
- O. Figes, *Natasha's Dance*
- Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*

Selected language textbooks, grammars and dictionaries

Although College libraries will have some of the following, it will be worth investing in a set of your own (full-size) dictionaries (the ones published in Russia are often quite reasonably priced), and in some reference works (Wade and Offord as mentioned above, and a verb book). It is very important that when you are here you should acquaint yourself with at least the following, so that you know where to look for the solution of difficulties in language work:

- Wade, as above - a very useful work, which will be referred to in lectures here on syntax.
- Offord, as above - a good practical course which will be used in class work. See also his very helpful guide called *Using Russian*.
- *Oxford Russian Grammar and Verbs* (ed. T. Wade, 2002) – an invaluable concise reference work.
- J.Fennell, *The Penguin Russian Course* - old-fashioned, dense but comprehensive (and N.J. Brown's *New Penguin Russian course*.)
- *Русский язык для всех, (Russian for All)* - a standard, originally Soviet-era, course in the Russian language.
- *Forbes' Russian Grammar* (revised Dumbreck) - like B. Unbegaun's *Russian Grammar*, old-fashioned descriptive/ reference grammars.
- Bitekhtina and Davidson, *Russian - Stage I, II, III* - Soviet/American textbook, good for grammar.
- Daum and Schenk, *Russian Verbs*; or T.Beyer, *501 Russian Verbs*; or R.Bivon, *The Russian Verb* - handy for all those tricky ones...
- P. Henry, *Modern Russian Prose Composition (Manual)* - an invaluable practical guide to common difficulties; out of print, so use in libraries.
- F.M. Borrás and R.F. Christian, *Russian Syntax* - an exhaustive compendium of information on usages.
- Soviet-and post-Soviet era dictionaries:
 - Russian-English dictionary (ed. Smirnitsky)
 - English-Russian dictionary (ed. Muller)
 - English-Russian dictionary (2 vols., ed. Galperin)
 - Russian-Russian dictionary (*Толковый словарь русского языка*, ed. Ozhegov)
- V. Dal', *Толковый словарь* (4 vols., fascinating 19th-century Russian-Russian dictionary).
- the *Oxford Russian-English* and *English-Russian* dictionaries.

- *The Modern Russian Dictionary for English Speakers*, (Pergamon) - useful phraseological dictionary, English-Russian only.
- S. Marder, *A Supplementary Russian-English Dictionary* (1992) - a handy first guide to the language of post-Soviet Russia.