



Congratulations on being offered a place at Queen's. While you'll be taught by a number of different tutors with a wide range of specialisms during your time at Oxford, I'll be advising you and organising your French tutorials throughout your course. I write today with some information about how best to prepare for your first year's study.

Your first year will be taken up with work for the Preliminary Examination in Modern Languages which will be sat in June, at the end of Trinity Term. For those reading French with another language or subject, the Examination will consist of four papers: two on language and two on literature (as set out below).

Language Papers:

I. This paper will consist of (a) French grammar (20 short sentences for translation into French); and (b) a prose passage for translation into French.

II. This paper will consist of (a) a prose passage for translation into English; and (b) translation of a passage from one of the texts prescribed for Paper IV, excluding *La Chastelaine de Vergi*.

Literature Papers:

III. Short Texts. You will study six brief but self-contained works (below), arranged in three contrasting pairs. In the examination you will be asked to write commentaries on three passages, one from each section (A, B, and C):

A. Montaigne, 'Des cannibales', from the *Essais*
Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*

B. Baudelaire, 'Spleen et Idéal' from *Les Fleurs du Mal* (30 poems only are set:
see list
printed at the end of this letter)

Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*

C. Racine, *Phèdre*
NDiaye, *Papa doit manger*

IV. Prose Fiction. You will study four texts (below). In the examination you will be asked to write essays on three of these, from a choice of questions on each text:

La Chastelaine de Vergi

Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*

Sand, *Indiana*

Proust, *Combray*

How should you prepare?

1. Language Work

While you are at Oxford, you will be improving your knowledge of the French language not only by reading literature but also by engaging (in weekly language classes) in a number of different linguistic exercises. For these you will need a secure grammatical grasp of French, including knowledge of verb paradigms for all tenses (including the past historic, for reading *and* for writing) and moods (including the subjunctive), and an ability to reproduce the full range of constructions. The harder you work on this aspect of your studies this summer, the more enjoyable you will find your first year.

You may already be using a French grammar which will supply you with the information you need. Equally recommended and perhaps more thorough is Glanville Price, *A Comprehensive French Grammar* (Blackwell), which also contains definitions of the basic terms of grammar. For a range of helpful monolingual exercises, Roger Hawkins, Richard Towell, and Marie-Noëlle Lamy, *Practising French Grammar: A Workbook* (4th edn, 2015), which is a companion volume to Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage* (4th edn, 2015).

2. Literature Work

There will be lectures on the Short Texts during the first term and on the novels during the second term. In the first term you will have tutorial work on four of the Short Texts; in the second term, on the remaining Short Texts and on the first two novels; and in the third term, on the remaining two novels. The second half of Trinity Term will be given over to revision.

It will be essential for you to have read the texts in advance of the lectures, and so you should have read all the Short Texts before you arrive. Since the Christmas Vacation is not very long (for the amount of reading you are likely to have), you should plan on reading at least two of the novels before October also.

A list of recommended editions is enclosed. It is important to have your own copies of the set texts because you will want to make notes in the margins. If your local bookshop is unable to supply the books you require, you may find it helpful to order them from Blackwell's (Broad St, Oxford, either in person or online). It is important to read and annotate (whether in the text itself or on separate paper) as thoroughly as possible so that you retain a detailed memory of the text: keep track of page numbers and fill your books with post-it notes so you can return to passages easily. The more slowly you read the text the first time round, the more quickly you will be able to reread it later when you have to produce a commentary or essay on it for your tutorial. It is vital that you read the texts in the original French, even if a translation can sometimes be a useful reference.

Please feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions. I wish you a productive summer and look forward to seeing you in October.

Prof Seth Whidden
Fellow in French

Paper III

Poems prescribed for study from the 'Spleen et Idéal' section of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*

Au Lecteur

- 3 Élévation
- 7 La Muse malade
- 10 L'Ennemi
- 19 La Géante
- 21 Hymne à la Beauté
- 23 La Chevelure
- 25 'Tu mettras l'univers entier dans ta ruelle'
- 28 Le Serpent qui danse
- 29 Une charogne
- 31 Le Vampire
- 36 Le Balcon
- 40 *Semper eadem*
- 44 Réversibilité
- 48 Le Flacon
- 49 Le Poison
- 50 Ciel brouillé
- 53 L'Invitation au voyage
- 62 *Moesta et errabunda*
- 66 Les Chats
- 69 La Musique
- 74 La Cloche fêlée
- 75 Spleen ('Pluviôse, irrité [...]')
- 76 Spleen ('J'ai plus de souvenirs [...]')
- 77 Spleen ('Je suis comme le roi [...]')
- 78 Spleen ('Quand le ciel bas et lourd [...]')
- 81 Alchimie de la douleur
- 83 L'Héautontimorouménos
- 84 L'Irrémédiable

Two very useful sources of information about French versification are Clive Scott's Appendix to Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Nineteenth-Century French Poetry: Introductions to Close Readings* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), enclosed; and the Introduction to Peter Broome and Graham Chesters, *The Appreciation of Modern French Poetry 1850-1950* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Recommended editions for Papers III and IV

Paper III

Montaigne, *Essais: 'Des cannibales', 'Des coches'*, ed. M. Tarpinian (Éditions Ellipses, 1994)

Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, ed. M. Delon (Gallimard [Folio], 2002)

Racine, *Phèdre*, ed. Raymond Picard (Gallimard [Folio], 2015)

NDiaye, *Papa doit manger* (Éditions de Minuit, 2003)

Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed. C. Pichois (Gallimard [Poésie], 2005)

Césaire, *Return to My Native Land / Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, trans. M. Rosello and A. Pritchard (Bloodaxe, 1995); the original was published by Présence africaine, 1983.

[The bilingual edition may be of help for points of vocabulary, and has an excellent introduction, although *it is essential to read the text in full in the original French.*]

Paper IV

La Chastelaine de Vergi, in *Nouvelles courtoises*, ed. Suzanne Méjean-Thiolier and Marie-Françoise

Notz-Grob (Livre de Poche, 1997)

or

La Châtelaine de Vergy, édition bilingue, ed. Jean Dufournet and Liliane Dulac (Gallimard [Folio],

1994)

Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, ed. R. Pomeau (Garnier-Flammarion, 1964) Sand, *Indiana* [1832], ed. Béatrice Didier (Gallimard [Folio], 1984)

Proust, *Combray*, in *Du côté de chez Swann* (which is the first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*), ed. Antoine Compagnon (Gallimard