****

**THE
BLACK & GOLD GUIDE**

**TO THE BLUE UNIVERSITIES**

*This handbook is intended to help students and parents work towards a competitive application to Oxford and Cambridge, but will also have a great deal of relevance for applications to other Highly Selective Universities and/or courses.*

Table of Contents

[Are these two universities really that different to everywhere else? 3](#_Toc508720866)

[What does a competitive applicant look like? 4](#_Toc508720867)

[What are the odds? 5](#_Toc508720868)

[How do Oxbridge select who they accept? 7](#_Toc508720869)

[How can I make my application more competitive? 8](#_Toc508720870)

[Further Reading – Review Sheet 11](#_Toc508720871)

[What happens in the year in which I apply? 12](#_Toc508720872)

[How scary is the interview? 13](#_Toc508720873)

[How do I choose a college? 14](#_Toc508720874)

[The Reading Lists 16](#_Toc508720875)

[Example Personal Statements 33](#_Toc508720876)

# Are these two universities really that different to everywhere else?

In one crucial regard, yes. Oxford and Cambridge have retained the tutorial teaching system, in which students are taught and assessed in very small groups – often one-on-one. This system encourages students to debate and defend their positions, and allows them access to leading academics that most students will have to wait for their post-graduate degrees to enjoy. Whilst this is not unique to Oxbridge (other universities such as Durham and Manchester also adopt a tutorial system), and whilst Oxford and Cambridge still offer lectures and lab sessions like other universities, the tutorial system is very firmly embedded in these two particular institutions. Also, the fierce competition for all places at these two universities creates a very different student body – diverse in backgrounds, but uniformly intelligent and, with a handful of exceptions, diligent.

However there are other highly selective universities in Britain, and there are specific courses, particularly Medicine, where the supremacy of the undergraduate teaching at Oxbridge would be challenged by many rivals. So they are special – but they are not alone in that.

**Oxford or Cambridge?**

There are key differences between the ‘dark blue university’ (Oxford) and ‘light blue university’ (Cambridge) that you need to bear in mind:

1. The courses are significantly difference at each university. In particular look out for the significant differences between the science courses at both universities, as well as the specific subject combinations available. In general there are more joint courses at Oxford (e.g. History and English, PPE, Maths and Philosophy), but the flexibility of the Tripos system at Cambridge allows you to chop and change your course a bit more when you are there, especially in Cambridge subjects like HSPS, Natural Science and MML.
2. The way in which the universities select their students is different. Cambridge and Oxford both now have admissions tests, but these do differ slightly between the two in terms of when they are taken, and what is included in them. It is very subject specific but the admissions websites are full of useful information about what each course requires you to do.

**Neither….?**

Oxford and Cambridge’s continuing grip on many aspects of public and commercial life is based largely on one fact – everyone who went there knows how hard and, at times, stressful it was. Thus employers keep hiring young Oxbridge graduates, safe in the knowledge that they probably worked harder and underwent more stress than other undergraduates, making them attractive employees for high-pressure careers. That, and the selection process, is what can make an Oxbridge degree more empowering than most others – but the price you pay for that empowerment is, therefore, a harder, more pressured undergraduate experience than many other universities would offer. And not everyone would thrive in this environment. In addition, not everyone suits the smaller college-based social networks at the two universities, or the course content they offer. In short, if you’re considering applying to one of these universities you must visit them and you must consider the possibility that these are not the best two universities in the country *for you*.

# What does a competitive applicant look like?

There is no getting past the fact that applying to Oxbridge is extremely competitive and getting more so. The two universities are seeking to recruit not just the sharpest young minds, but the most dedicated. Many other universities are now just as competitive. Here is what the top universities expect from successful applicants:

Top academic credentials

1. The average set of GCSE grades successful applicants to Oxbridge have is 8.5 A\*s and 2 As. This is just an average, and some applications have been accepted with fewer top grades (see point 4, below) – but you must have a string of A\*s and As to your name in order for your application to be taken seriously by Oxbridge and other top universities.
2. Specific courses will, of course, have specific A Level requirements. However a simple rule of thumb is that a competitive candidate would be expected to secure an A\* in any A Level subject directly related to their degree choice. A prediction of fewer than 3As is likely to disadvantage an application.
3. With the possible exception of Further Maths students, we would advise that exceptional predictions/results in three A Level subjects will suffice – *all* universities will be concerned not to discriminate against students whose schools ordered them to only take three A Levels. Oxbridge have specifically advised students that, if it’s a choice between an extra A Level and exploring your subjects beyond the classroom, they should choose the latter.
4. It is worth pointing out, however, that in contrast to other universities, Oxford and Cambridge interview all applicants who do sufficiently well in their tests. They have great confidence in their selection tools – national exam results are not their sole measure of suitability. Therefore Aldenham does not ‘screen’ applicants and tell them not to apply on the basis of their results – but we will honestly appraise your chances.

What are the odds?

**The odds at Oxford**

Applications to Oxford have increased by 38% in the past ten years, reaching an all-time high of 19,144 in 2015 (the 2016 cycle).







**The odds at Cambridge**

In 2016 the total number of applications was 16,750 (16,431), an increase of 1.9% on the year before. The total number of offers was 4,307 (4,253), an increase of 1.3%.

**Applicant success rates at Cambridge by subject, 2016**



# How do Oxbridge select who they accept?

The information below was recently released by Cambridge:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| *We do try to interview every applicant who, on the basis of their paper application, we judge likely to have both a reasonable chance of securing an offer, and of meeting the typical entry requirements for Cambridge, as detailed on the University website: generally, A Levels at grades A\*A\*A (or their equivalent) for Sciences other than Psychological and Behavioural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (which ask for A\*AA), and grades A\*AA for Arts and Social Sciences other than Economics (where the typical offer is A\*A\*A). Where we have capacity, we will also try to see those where there was solid evidence either that they are on a sharp upward trajectory or that they have been significantly disadvantaged by educational or personal circumstance. For candidates in the latter group, the completion of an*[*Extenuating Circumstances Form*](https://exchange.hppc.co.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=_hbvU2l9jxQowHiXfKaOvhUiMvcMHAaOHTaodaD1vYi0vCDLpAXVCA..&URL=http%3a%2f%2fcam.us11.list-manage.com%2ftrack%2fclick%3fu%3d3280fc47c12117f5fdac79148%26id%3d6e0336434f%26e%3da8bc920df7)*is extremely helpful in our assessment.* *At interview, the strongest applicants demonstrated that they had chosen their degree programme at Cambridge carefully, and understood the demands of the course. They showed that they could organise their thinking well, arguing logically, responding positively to challenge, and were able to rethink or refine their initial thoughts on a question when presented with new information, or a different way of approaching it. They were also able to back up their responses with appropriate evidence, drawn from academic sources as well as personal experience. They displayed real academic curiosity about the topics discussed, and could show that they had explored their subject outside of the school curriculum (which might have been through a taster day, a self-guided project, or through on-line exploration or deeper reading into particular interests). Most importantly, they didn’t give up when presented with something not immediately familiar, but persevered, using their existing knowledge and understanding, to approach an answer.* *We used the results of the admissions assessments as an additional piece of information in our application process, rather than as a formalised selection or deselection tool. Current research underway in Cambridge will help to guide their future role in our process; in the meantime, the coming admissions round will see a similar approach to their use. We used information from AS exams (both modular and linear) in the same way, to help us understand an applicant’s recent academic profile. Where this information was unavailable, we were able to draw on the detail about performance in internal exams that many of you so helpfully provided in your references (often along with a very short statement about your particular setting’s approach to curriculum reform).* |

 |

 |

# How can I make my application more competitive?

There is no innate bias against candidates from independent schools in the Oxbridge application process – indeed, candidates from independent schools have a statistically higher success rate than the maintained sector. But... independent schools applicants will be expected to have taken advantage of the academic opportunities open to them at a school like Aldenham, and in their wider lives. You will need to demonstrate that you didn’t just complete the academic essentials, you went far beyond that in pursuit of your genuine intellectual passion. Some elements of a competitive application will be:

**Wider reading**

This is non-negotiable. All applicants with have ‘read around’ their subjects and ‘read deeply’ in some specific areas. You are not expected to become an anthropologist before applying to anthropology, but you must have read enough to understand the true nature of that subject, and you are expected to have vigorously pursued your interest in more traditional school-based subjects such as English. This applies to all subjects – applicants are expected to show this rudimentary level of intellectual curiosity no credible candidate ever minds doing the reading. It should begin as soon as possible – even if you don’t know what course you want to apply for, how else are you going to find out?

**An EPQ**

The Extended Project represents a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate your interest in the university subject area you most fancy, and you should choose you EPQ topic accordingly. Please think deeply about how to link your EPQ to your preferred subject at university – choosing the two should go hand in hand. It is our expectation that every student applying to Oxbridge, or any other HSU, will have completed an EPQ *unless they are doing four A Levels* (e.g. those doing Further Maths).

**Essay and science competitions**

There are numerous Year 12 competitions in essay-writing, on every imaginable subject, run by universities and Oxbridge colleges. It is our expectation that every serious Oxbridge candidate from Aldenham will have entered such a competition, and they will prove invaluable to applicants to any university. A list of such essay competitions is in the back of this book. Subject departments will also promote these competitions. Similarly, Aldenham’s Science Departments offer participation in a range of team and individual science contests. You should participate in those.

**Attending talks and lectures**

Both inside and outside school, talks and lectures provide inspiration, and also evidence of subject interest for personal statements. Viewing or listening to lectures online is advisable, but nothing beats getting used to attending live lectures. Look out for lectures organised by the universities themselves, but also those organised by think tanks, societies or even at local theatres.

**Organising and *delivering* talks and lectures**

The school will provide you with chances to invite speakers to Aldenham, and even chances to deliver your own talks and presentations to peers and teachers outside classes – but the whole point is that you need to display individual initiative, so we would strongly encourage you to make your own opportunities. If there is a speaker you want to hear, or a speech you want to give, contact the relevant Head of Department who will help you to arrange it.

**Contributing to (forming and leading) clubs and societies.**

Initiative is a key element in an application to any university, so while attendance at clubs and societies with an intellectual interest is healthy, volunteering to lead projects, organise events or launch societies is still more valuable. If you want to get involved, speak to your classroom teachers or relevant Head of Department.

**Self-taught qualifications**

It is common for Maths applicants to teach themselves exam modules, but it is worth considering that (provided your core subjects do not suffer) Aldenham is happy to administer exams for you in any subject, or you can compete courses online, through MOOCs (massive open online courses) or iTunes University. *This should not be attempted if it seems a chore: the purpose is to demonstrably pursue your passions outside the classroom, not to manufacture those passions.*

**Peer teaching**

Teaching content to your peers or students in years below you is a win-win-win-win – you learn, they learn, it’s good for the ‘personal statement’ and it’s good for the soul. It is well worth, therefore, considering offering up your services to a Head of Department who will know how they might best be used.

**High-intellect work experience**

The last three entries in this list refer predominantly to the summer holiday between Year 12 and Year 13, which is a key focus for competitive applications, offering up nine weeks unfettered by school routine. One option – crucial for science and business-based subjects, advisable for all – is of course to participate in work experience. The more cerebral and challenging the better – prestige is not important, but being able to report that you thought and worked hard is.

**Challenging volunteer work**

Highly selective universities, once you are there, are characterised by two important things – hard work and diversity. You can often prepare yourself well for these two things through volunteer work. Again though, it is about pursuing challenges, seeking volunteer opportunities that take you out of Aldenham’s comparably calm and prosperous comfort zone and into what is sometimes called ‘the real world’. This is particularly valuable if you are applying after your Year 13 year has ended – how will you use the ‘gap year’ to contribute to others and challenge yourself?

**Summer schools and masterclasses**

There are masses of summer learning options provided for the summer (and occasionally other school holidays) by various institutions including Oxbridge colleges and many other universities. Speak to Heads of Department about subject-specific courses and masterclasses that may be suitable for you. Of course, very few of these are free, but they can be inspirational in two regards: exposure to undergraduate-level teaching; and exposure to ‘the competition’.

**Keeping a record**

When you come to write your personal statement in September of Year 13, you will be delighted that you recorded all this activity as you went along, rather than trying to dredge up the memories. The further reading record sheet included in here is a useful tool to record evidence of further reading and, if kept up on a weekly basis, you will have a wealth of research to draw upon.

**Thinking deeply**

Thinking deeply about the subjects you are studying is vital. Oxbridge candidates will need to do more than just be able to memorise information and excel at examinations. In Science and Maths this means being able to understand theories from first principles, giving you the true understanding that will allow you to apply existing understand how and why theories have developed over time. In Arts and the Humanities this means avoiding superficial analysis and really getting under the skin of a topic in terms by critically evaluating every aspect of your reading, and not simply accepting what you are reading as being the whole truth.

**A final thought**….

It must now seem clear that one decisive factor in delivering a competitive application is starting early. While it is important to explore the options, investigate a range of choices and find out what new subjects like Anthropology and Linguistics *are,* the sooner you settle on a subject area for university, the better. Then everything you do from the list above can point in that one direction. Changing direction is definitely an option – but standing still is not, so much better to make a choice and pursue it than do nothing at all.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title/ source /author:  |  |
| Summarise the argument presented in no more than 50 words |  |
| Most interesting fact/ argument gained from reading: |  |
| One assumption made that you could question: |  |
| One thing you disagreed with:  |  |
| Questions the article has left your with: |  |

# Further Reading – Review Sheet (available as a google form)

# What happens in the year in which I apply?

Starting from the second half of Christmas term in Year 12, any potential applicant to the most highly selective universities will be given a supervisor from the teaching staff and they will meet regularly to monitor the student’s progress in wider reading and other ‘super-curricular’ activities such as competition entries. From the start of the Year 13 year those meetings become much more focused on the mechanics of application, and each student will also have an additional fortnightly meeting with the Assistant Head (Sixth Form). You will get support with the following:

1. Finalising choice of institution, course and college: we would expect the first two to be finalised before the start of term; the third is less vital – see guidance later.
2. Drafting your personal statement. Examples of this document are included in the handbook. It is, in short, a ‘sales pitch’ in which the student demonstrates their understanding of the course to which they are applying, shows their commitment to academic study through their ‘super-curricular’ activities, and explains why they are drawn to that undergraduate subject, and well-suited to it. It is, in many ways, *a chronicle of a Year 12 Year well spent.*
3. Completing the UCAS application form.
4. Preparation, through mocks and teaching, for any aptitude tests required of entrants to each subject.
5. Sitting those tests, at Aldenham, typically in the first week of November.
6. Preparation for interviews, through mock interviews, swaps with other schools and meetings with former applicants from Aldenham.
7. If a candidate is called for interview, they tend to take place in the second week of December, with decisions arriving at the start of the Lent Term.

# How scary is the interview?

University interviews across all disciplines are now far more professional, and far less quirky, than in the recent past. Medical School panels no longer ask if your Dad was a doctor; Oxbridge interviewers no longer ask impenetrable questions while smoking a pipe. You are almost certain to face some kind of standardised task, such as a translation, a poem to analyse or a maths problem to solve; you are very likely to be interviewed by at least two people, in order to ensure you are treated fairly; and questions now tend to be standardised across applicants to a considerable degree. You are likely to be asked about subjects you have mentioned in your personal statement and any submitted work, so revision is required. However these things are nothing to be scared of – if you are genuinely passionate about your subject and have pursued your academic interests beyond the curriculum, you will enjoy the experience.

**Can I apply after I leave Aldenham?**

Yes. We will support your application fully, and the benefit of the extra reading time can be considerable for Humanities applicants. Maths and Sciences applicants are, however, usually expected to apply while at Aldenham, as the exam preparation is so much more significant.

# How do I choose a college?

Oxbridge Colleges will tell you that, no matter which college you apply to, you have an equal chance of getting in. They say this because of the ‘pooling’ systems whereby, if there are a large number of good applicants to one college, that college will pass those applicants on to other colleges. The pooling system is slightly different at the two universities. At Oxford, good candidates may be sent to interview at another college, whilst at Cambridge they would be put into a central pool and may be ‘fished out’ by any college who has found itself short of good quality applicants. This happens quite frequently. Indeed, around 27% of successful candidates for 2014 entry into Oxford ended up at colleges which they had not applied to.

However, it is still worth thinking carefully about which college you apply to. After all, there is little point being ‘pooled’ if the spaces at other colleges have already been filled by applicants who applied to those colleges in the first place. Moreover it’s advisable to pick a college which you would actually like to live and work in! Therefore the key things to consider are:

**1. The number of people who are accepted each year to study the subject at a college**

In general, it is better to apply to colleges where there are more people accepted for your course. This is for two reasons. First, it is not much fun to be the only one studying your course at your college! Second, from a pure numbers perspective, if there are 8 places up for grabs then you have only got to be in the top 8 students to get in. If there are 2 places up for grabs, then you have got to be in the top 2. Now whilst more people will presumably apply to the colleges with a larger quota of students, the odds are still likely to be stacked slightly more in your favour if they accept larger cohorts for your specific subject.

**2. The previous number of applicants per place to study the subject at the college**

This is a tricky one as the number of applicants vary from year to year (although 3 year averages are available on the university websites). In general, the odds will be slightly better if you apply to a college that has not received many applicants in previous years. This information should clearly be correlated with the number of students accepted by that college for your subject. There is a slight game theory element to this, as you can bet that other students around the country will be thinking along the same lines and colleges that were previously low on applicants might see a reversal in the trend in the future, but it is nonetheless worth factoring into your calculations.

The information for the above two points can be sought using the following links:

Oxford: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics/undergraduate/additional-info/college-success-rates?wssl=1>

Cambridge: <http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/apply/statistics>

**3. The supposed “prestige” of the college, often based on age and location to the city centre**

When you are at Oxbridge, you really won’t care which college you are in, and to base your decision on the age of the building or the location of the college really is missing the point. To this effect, it can be advisable not to follow the crowd and avoid applications to the “prestigious” colleges, often located in the centre of the city.

**4. The colleges are different in terms of atmosphere and facilities**

Whilst the teaching you will receive at Oxbridge will be the same no matter which college you attend, there are variations in provision in terms of accommodation, sporting and leisure facilities and atmosphere between the colleges. Whilst this is hopefully of secondary importance to you in relation to a successful application, it is worth checking online “alternative” prospectuses to see what the current students have to say about their colleges. Remember, teachers and parents went to these places a long time ago; their accounts are not guaranteed to reflect the college as it is now!

**Open applications**

There is one way to avoid the decision of which college to apply for, and that is to do an ‘open application’. This is when a computer algorithm assigns you a nominal ‘college of preference’, and whilst all colleges will receive some applications from open applications, this is a way of evening up allocations to the various colleges. When considering candidates, tutors do not know whether or not the candidates chose to name a college of preference, and you will not be at any disadvantage at interview for not directly picking that college.

**Final thoughts**

Overall do not fret too much about your choice of college; it is very unlikely to make a significant difference to your application. If you need any extra advice then contact the colleges directly themselves.

# The Reading Lists

The lists below are merely suggestions – it is for you to research other titles that may be of interest. You are free to speak to the librarian if there are books of particular interest that you would like to read.

ANTHROPOLOGY (BIOLOGICAL)

* Robert Boyd & Joan Silk, 2009, *How Humans Evolved* (5th ed); WW Norton & Co
* Frans de Waal, 2001, *Tree of Origin: What Primate Behaviour Can Tell Us About Human Social Evolution*; Harvard University Press
* Matt Ridley, 2003, *Nature via Nurture. Genes, Experience and what makes us Human* (4th edition); Estate
* Larsen, Clark Spencer, 2011, *Our Origins: Discovering Physical Anthropology;* Wiley
* Jobling M, Hollox E, Hurles M, Kivisild T and Tyler-Smith C (2013) *Human Evolutionary Genetics* (2nd ed); Garland Science, Abingdon and New York

ANTHROPOLGY (SOCIAL)

* Rita Astuti, Jonathan P Parry, and Charles Stafford (editors), 2007, *Questions of Anthropology;* Oxford
* Sharon E. Hutchinson, 1996, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State*; Uni. of California HSPS
* Michael Stewart, 1997, *The Time of the Gypsies*; Westview Press
* Lila Abu-Lughod, 1986, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*; University of California Press
* Michael Carrithers, 1992, *Why Humans Have Cultures: Explaining Anthropology and Social Diversity*; Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGY

* Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, 2012, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (6th ed); Thames & Hudson
* Christopher Scarre (editor), 2005, *The Human Past*; Thames and Hudson
* Robert Wenke, 1999, *Patterns in Prehistory* (4th ed); Oxford University Press
* Mesopotamia: Dominique Charpin, 2010, *Reading and Writing in Babylon*; Harvard University Press
* Michael Roaf, 1996, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia*; Andromeda
* Andrew George, 1999, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Penguin Classics
* Martin Worthington, 2012 ed., *Teach Yourself Complete Babylonian*, Hodder
* Mark Collier & Bill Manley, 1998, *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs: A step-by-step guide to teach yourself*, British Museum

BIOLOGY (see ‘Science’ section)

CHEMISTRY (see also ‘Science’ section)

Alongside your course text book, other generic Sixth Form text books go into greater depth on many topics. It is also useful to read different authors’ explanations of the chemical concepts you are studying:

* Hill, Graham & Holman, John (2000): Chemistry in Context (other editions available)
* Ryan, Lawrie (2000): Advanced Chemistry for You (other editions available)

Suggested popular science/biography titles are given below. There isn’t an expectation that you read all of these. Look them up, read the blurb and select perhaps 1-2 per term (more in the holidays!). Some titles are available in the School library or in the Chemistry Department. Older titles particularly are available cheaply second-hand through online stores, e.g. Amazon.

* Atkins, Peter (2003): Atkins’ Molecules
* Atkins, Peter (2007): Four Laws That Drive the Universe (Very Short Introductions)
* Atkins, Peter (2013): What is Chemistry?
* Baggott, J.E. (1996): Perfect symmetry: Accidental Discovery of Buckminsterfullerene
* Ball, Philip (1999): H2O: A Biography of Water
* Ball, Philip (2005): Elegant Solutions: Ten Beautiful Experiments in Chemistry
* Bryson, Bill (2004/2016): A Short History of Nearly Everything
* Eig (2014): The Birth of the Pill – How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution
* Emsley, John (2000); The Shocking History of Phosphorous
* Emsley, John (2015): Chemistry at Home
* Emsley, John; The Elements of Murder (2006) / Molecules of Murder (2008) / More Molecules of Murder (2017)
* Ferry, Georgina (2014): Dorothy Hodgkin: A Life
* Garfield, Simon (2001): Mauve: How One Man Invented a Colour That Changed the World.
* Hermes, M.E. (1996): Enough for One Lifetime: Wallace Carothers, Inventor of Nylon (History of Modern Chemical Sciences)
* Keeler, James & Wothers, Peter (2003): Why Chemical Reactions Happen.
* Keen, Sam (2011): The disappearing spoon… and other true tales from the Periodic Table
* Levi, Primo (2000): The Periodic Table
* Miodownik, Mark (2014): Stuff matters: The Strange Stories of the Marvellous Materials that Made Our Man-made World
* Moore, Kate (2016): The Radium Girls: They paid with their lives. Their final fight was for justice.
* Strathern, Paul (2000): Mendeleyev’s Dream: The Quest for the Elements

Finally, websites are a source of contemporary chemistry news and articles:

* RSC; Chemistry World - <https://www.chemistryworld.com/>
* ASC; Chemical and Engineering News - <https://cen.acs.org/>
* Nobel Prize: <https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/chemistry.html>
* Exploring everyday chemistry, a free Massive Open Online Course from University of York: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/everyday-chemistry>

CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY

**General Introduction**

* Beard, M., Henderson, J. *A Very Short Introduction to Classics*(Oxford University Press 2000)
* M. Beard *Confronting the Classics*
* Renshaw, J. (2015) *In Search of the Greeks, London: Bloomsbury Academic*
* Renshaw, J. (2012) *In Search of the Romans, Bristol Classical Press*
* S Goldhill *Love, Sex and Tragedy*
* Lane Fox, R. *The Classical World: An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian*(Penguin 2006)
* Omnibus: http://www.jact.org/publications/omnibus.htm

**Latin Literature (Primary and Secondary Texts)**

* The works of: Aeneid, Seneca, Catullus, Ovid etc.
* P. R. Hardie, *Virgil* (*Greece & Rome New Surveys in the Classics*, Oxford, 1998)
* W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil’s Aeneid* (paperback, Oxford 1969)
* R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil’s Aeneid* (paperback, Oxford 1992)
* C. Martindale, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* (Cambridge, 1997)
* R. Jenkyns, *Classical Epic: Homer and Virgil*
* Camps, W. A. (1969) An Introduction to Virgil’s Aeneid, Oxford University Press
* Deryck Williams, R. (2013) Aeneas and the Roman Hero (Inside the Ancient World) Bloomsbury
* Gransden, K. W. (2004) Virgil: The Aeneid (Landmarks of World Literature), Cambridge University Press
* Griffin, J. (2013) Virgil (Ancients in Action), Bloomsbury
* Martindale, C. (ed) (1997) *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil,* Cambridge University Press

**Greek Literature (Primary and Secondary Texts)**

* The works of: Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle etc.
* R. B. Rutherford, *Homer* (*Greece & Rome New Surveys in the Classics*, Oxford, 2nd Ed. 2013)
* J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980)
* O. Taplin, *Homeric Soundings* (Oxford, 1992)
* Fowler, R. (ed) (2004) The Cambridge Companion to Homer, Cambridge University Press
* Griffin, J. (2013) Homer (Ancients in Action), Bloomsbury
* Griffin, J. (2010) Homer The Odyssey (Landmarks of World Literature), Cambridge University Press
* R. Jenkyns, *Classical Epic: Homer and Virgil*
* Jones, P. (1989) Homer’s Odyssey: A Companion to the Translation of Richmond Lattimore, Southern Illinois University Press
* Owen, E. T. (1994) The Story of the Iliad, Bristol Classical Press
* Nicholson, A. (2015) The Mighty Dead: Why Homer Matters, William Collins
* Silk, M. S. (1986) Homer The Iliad (Landmarks of World Literature) Cambridge University Press
* Weil, S. (1939) The Iliad or the Poem of Force, various editions available
* G. Autenrieth’s *Homeric Dictionary* (Duckworth, 1984) is a useful aid.
* W, Allan, *Homer: the Iliad* (Bristol, 2012)

**Ancient History (Primary and Secondary Texts)**

* The works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Tacitus, Livy, Suetonius etc.
* H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: a history of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68.* (this been published in many editions: the latest is by Routledge, 1998)
* O. Murray, *Early Greece* (Fontana, 2nd ed. 1993)
* J.K. Davies, *Democracy and Classical Greece* (Fontana, 2nd ed. 1993)
* Mary Beard, *SPQR. A History of Ancient Rome* (2015)
* Cartledge, P. *The Greeks. A Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford University Press 2002)

**Social and Cultural Studies**

* Treggiari, S. *Roman Social History* (Routledge 2002)
* Brut Zaidman, L. (1992) *Religion in the Ancient Greek City,* Cambridge University Press
* Emerson, M. (2007) *Greek Sanctuaries: An Introduction,* Bristol Classical Press
* Garland, R. (2013) *Religion and the Greeks (Classical World Series),* Bloomsbury
* Parker, R. (2007) *Polytheism and Society at Athens,* Oxford University Press
* Price, S. (1999) *Religions of the Ancient Greeks (Key Themes in Ancient History),* Cambridge University Press

**Reception**

There are numerous books influenced by the literature and history of the Ancient World. Some examples include:

* David Malouf, *Ransom*
* Zachary Mason, *Lost Books of the Odyssey*
* Milton, *Paradise Lost*
* Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*
* Dante, *Inferno*
* A.E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*
* Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*
* Amit Chaudhuri, *Odysseus Abroad*
* Ali Smith, *Boy Meets Girl*
* Donna Tartt, *The Secret History*
* Tony Harrison, *Selected Poems*

COMPUTER SCIENCE

* *Computational Fairy Tales*by Jeremy Kubica- a romp through the principles of computational thinking, illustrating high-level computer science concepts, the motivation behind them, and their application via the medium of a fairy tale. Aimed at secondary school students. "Bonkers, but very enjoyable."
* *Computer Science: An Overview* by J. Glenn Brookshear - overview of what computer science is all about: each topic is presented with its historical perspective, current state, and future potential, as well as ethical issues.
* *Code: The Hidden Language of Computer Hardware and Software* by Charles Petzold - "What do flashlights, the British invasion, black cats, and seesaws have to do with computers? ...see how ingenuity and our very human compulsion to communicate have driven the technological innovations of the past two centuries."
* *Out of Their Minds* by D Shasha and Cathy Lazere- the lives and discoveries of fifteen unsung computer scientists whose programs have helped people from factory owners to cartoonists.
* *The Pattern on the Stone: The Simple Ideas That Make Computers Work* by Daniel Hillis - explains the basic concepts of the computer in everyday language.
* *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood* by James Gleick - a chronicle that shows how information has become "the modern era's defining quality - the blood, the fuel, the vital principle of our world."
* *The Pleasures of Counting* by Tom Kôrner - puts Maths into the context of how it is used to solve real-world problems.
* *The Code Book* by Simon Singh - not strictly about Computer Science, but an interesting introduction to code-breaking and cryptography, fields that have a strong connection to Computer Science.
* *The New Turing Omnibus* by A Kee Dewdney- mini articles on Computer Science topics.
* *Algorithmic Puzzles* by Anany Levitin and Maria Levitin - "...The emphasis lies in training the reader to think algorithmically and develop new puzzle-solving skills: the majority of puzzles are problems where we are asked to find the shortest distance or the fewest moves to get from A to B, or construct a proof that a puzzle has no solution ..."
* CS4FN (Computer Science for Fun) is a magazine on computer science aimed at school students "Explore how computer science is also about people, solving puzzles, creativity, changing the future and, most of all, having fun." It is printed twice a year and has an associated website with additional articles. <http://www.cs4fn.org/>
* Computer Science Unplugged - a Computer Science curriculum for pre-university students developed in New Zealand. <http://csunplugged.org/>
* Free, online lectures and courses from **Academic Earth**. (There's a Maths section as well as the Computer Science one) <http://www.academicearth.org/subjects/computerscience>
* *Quantum Computing for High School Students* - article from **Scott Aaronson** at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <http://www.scottaaronson.com/writings/highschool.html>
* The columns of Brian Hayes in **American Scientist magazine**. <http://www.americanscientist.org/authors/detail/brian-hayes>
* Articles by the journalist **Sara Robinson**. <http://www.msri.org/people/members/sara/>
* Computational Thinking, **by Jeannette M. Wing.** <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/usr/wing/www/publications/Wing06.pdf>
* BBC's **Make IT Digital** initiative. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/makeitdigital>
* **Oxford Mathematics Alphabet.** <http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/about-us/life-oxford-mathematics/oxford-mathematics-alphabet>
* The University of Oxford’s **GeomLab** website which will introduce you to some of the most important ideas in computer programming in an interactive, visual way through a guided activity. <http://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/geomlab/>
* **The Turtle system** is a graphics programming environment designed to provide an enjoyable introduction to programming in Java syntax, together with a practical insight into fundamental concepts of computer science such as compilation and machine code. <http://www.turtle.ox.ac.uk/>
* The **Alice system** from Carnegie Mellon University provides a point-and-click environment for designing 3-D animations and is a useful introduction to object-oriented programming. <http://www.alice.org/>
* **Elizabeth** is an automated conversation and natural language processing program that provides an enjoyable introduction to natural language processing, and that can give insights into some of the fundamental methods and issues of artificial intelligence within an entertaining context. <http://www.philocomp.net/ai/elizabeth.htm>
* **CodeAcademy** provides a fun introduction to programming. <http://www.codecademy.com/>
* **Young Rewired State** is a series of collaborative hacking events for under 18s. It brings together young developers to build web and mobile applications that attempt to solve real world problems. <http://www.yrs.io/>
* **Project Euler** is a series of challenging mathematical/computer programming problems. <http://projecteuler.net./>
* Female prospective students might be interested in the work of the **National Centre for Women and Information Technology** <http://www.ncwit.org/>
* The ‎**British Informatics Olympiad** is a national computer programming competition for British Schools and colleges. <http://www.olympiad.org.uk/>

DESIGN

* “Designing the 21st Century” by Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell
* “The Nature and Art of Workmanship” by David Pye
* “The Design of Everyday Things” by Donald A Norman
* “Great Design” by Philip Wilkinson (a Dorling Kindersley publication)
* “Toothpicks and Logos: Design in Everyday Life” by John Heskett
* “Clock This: My Life as an Inventor” by Trevor Bayliss
* “1000 Product Designs: Form, Function and Technology from Around the World” by Eric Chan
* “1000 New Designs 2: And Where to Find Them” by Jennifer Hudson
* “Manufacturing Techniques for Product Design” by Chris Lefteri
* “Against the Odds: An Autobiography” by James Dyson
* “The Measure of Man and Woman: Human Factors in Design” by Alvin R. Tilley, Henry Dreyfuss Associates

DRAMA

* Artaud, A. (2013). *The Theatre and its Double*, Alma Classics
* Ayckbourn, A. (2002). *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*, London: Faber and Faber
* Benedetti, Jean, *Stanislavski: An Introduction*, Methuen Drama, 2008
* Berry, Cicely, *Voice and the Actor*, Jossey Bass, 1991
* Bloom, Michael, *Thinking Like A Director: A Practical Handbook*, Faber and Faber, 2001
* Boal, Augusto, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Routledge, 2002
* Boal, Augusto, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Pluto Press, 2008
* Brecht, B. & Willet, D. *ed.*,(1978). *Brecht on Theatre*, London: Methuen Drama.
* Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space,* Penguin Classics, 2008
* Eyre, Richard, *Talking Theatre*, Nick Hern Books, 2011
* Graham, Scott and Hoggett, Steven, *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre*, Routledge 2014
* Gurr, A. (2009). *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
* Hartnoll, P. (2012). *The Theatre: A Concise History*, Thames and Hudson
* Johnstone, K. (1981). *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, London: Methuen Drama.
* LeCoq, Jacques, *The Moving Body (le Corps Poetique): Teaching Creative Theatre*, Methuen Drama 2009.
* Mamet, D. (1998). *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, Faber and Faber.
* McCallion, M. (1998), *The Voice Book*, London: Faber and Faber
* Mitchell, Katie, *The Director’s Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, Routledge, 2008
* Stanislavski, C. (2013). *An Actor Prepares*, Bloomsbury Academic
* Stanislavski, C. (2013). *Building a Character*, Bloomsbury Academic
* Stanislavski, C. (2013). *Creating a Role*, Bloomsbury Academic
* Unwin, S. (2014). *The Complete Brecht Toolkit*, Nick Hern Books.

ECONOMICS

* Daniel Kahnemann, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (psychology and behavioural economics. Terrific.)
* Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel* (about human history, a terrific read)
* Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive* (not quite so good, but interesting. Hint: don't cut down the trees...)
* Cormac O'Grada, *Eating People is Wrong* (if interested in famines and development)
* Gernot Wagner and Martin Weitzman, *Climate Shock* (if interested in the problem of climate change)
* Will Hutton, *How Good We Can Be* (gloomy follow up to The State We're In, about UK's economy and prospects)
* Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, *Nudge* (more on behavioural economics)
* Julian Le Grand and Bill New, *Government Paternalism* (a counter argument to Nudge)
* Joseph Stiglitz, any of his titles are outstanding.

ENGINEERING

* Sustainable Energy – Without the Hot Air by David J.C. MacKay
* How Do Wings Work? by Holger Babinsky Published by Physics Education, 2003 (artile available as a free download from the Physics Education website)
* Sustainable Materials – With Both Eyes Open by Julian Allwood and Jonathan Cullen (available as a free download from <http://withbotheyesopen.com/read.php>)
* Engineering in Society edited by Rob Lawlor (available as a free (pdf) download from the RAEng website)
* Engineering: A Beginner's Guide by Natasha McCarthy
* The New Science of Strong Materials – or Why You Don't Fall Through the Floor by J.E. Gordon
* Structures – or Why Things Don't Fall Down by J.E. Gordon
* Cats' Paws and Catapults: Mechanical Worlds of Nature and People by Steven Vogel
* The Gecko's Foot: How Scientists are Taking a Leaf from Nature's Book by Peter Forbes
* What Engineers Know and How They Know It: Analytical Studies from Aeronautical History by W.G. Vincenti
* Flying Buttresses, Entropy and O-Rings: The World of an Engineer by James L. Adams
* Bebop to the Boolean Boogie: An Unconventional Guide to Electronics by Clive Maxfield
* Invention by Design – How Engineers get from Thought to Thing by Henry Petroski
* To Engineer is Human: The Role of Failure in Successful Design by Henry Petroski
* Remaking the World by Henry Petroski
* Small Things Considered: Why There is No Perfect Design by Henry Petroski
* Pushing the Limits: New Adventures in Engineering by Henry Petroski
* Why Things Break: Understanding the World by the Way It Comes Apart by Mark E. Eberhart
* The Backroom Boys: The Secret Return of the British Boffin by Francis Spufford
* The Existential Pleasures of Engineering by Samuel C. Florman
* Think Like An Engineer by Guru Madhavan
* How Things Work – The Physics of Everyday Life by Louis A. Bloomfield

ENGLISH

**20th Century Classics**

* Margaret Atwood *The Handmaid’s Tale/Cat’s Eye*
* Daphne du Maurier *Rebecca*
* John Fowles *The Collector*
* Graham Greene *The End of the Affair / Our man in Havana*
* Joseph Heller *Catch 22*
* John Irving *The world according to Garp*
* Kazuo Ishiguro *The Remains of the Day / Never let me go*
* John Le Carre *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*
* Doris Lessing *The Good Terrorist*
* Gabriel Garcia Marquez *Love in the Time of Cholera*
* Rohinton Mistry *A Fine Balance / Tales from Firozsha Baag*
* Toni Morrison *Beloved / The Bluest Eye*
* Alice Walker *The Color Purple*
* Evelyn Waugh *Brideshead Revisited / Scoop*

**Interesting Narrative Structures**

* S. Byatt *Possession*
* Julian Barnes *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*
* Jorge Luis Borges *Labyrinths*
* Louis de Bernieres *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin*
* Umberto Eco *The Name of the Rose*
* Michel Faber *Under the skin*
* Jonas Jonasson *The 100 year old man who climbed out a window and disappeared*
* James Joyce *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man / Dubliners*
* Hilary Mantel *Wolf Hall / Beyond Black*
* David Mitchell *Ghostwritten/Cloud Atlas*
* Vladimir Nabokov *Pale Fire*
* Thomas Pinchon *The Crying of Lot 49*
* Salman Rushdie *Haroun and the sea of stories*
* Kurt Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse Five*
* Jeanette Winterson *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*
* Virginia Woolf *Orlando/Mrs Dalloway/To the Lighthouse*

**Excellent Contemporary Reads**

* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Purple Hibiscus/Half of a Yellow Sun*
* Monica Ali *Brick Lane*
* Jo Baker *Longbourn*
* Sebastian Barry *The Secret Scripture*
* Sebastian Faulks *Birdsong*
* Eleanor Catton *The Luminaries*
* Khaled Hosseini *A Thousand Splendid Suns/The Kite Runner*
* Lloyd Jones *Mister Pip*
* Barbara Kingsolver *The Poisonwood Bible*
* Andrea Levy *Small Island*
* Yann Martel *Life of Pi*
* Cormac McCarthy *All the pretty horses*
* Ian McEwan *Solar / Enduring Love*
* Audrey Niffenegger *The Time Traveler’s Wife*
* Jed Rubenfeld *The Interpretation of Murder*
* Taiye Selasi *Ghana must go*
* Kathryn Stockett *The Help*
* Zadie Smith *White Teeth*
* Donna Tartt *Secret History*
* Sarah Waters *The Little Stranger*
* Carlos Ruis Zafon *Shadow of the Wind*
* Marcus Zusak *The Book Thief*

**Something a bit different**

* Isabel Allende *The House of the Spirits*
* Angela Carter *The Magic Toyshop*
* Helen Dunmore *The Visitation*
* Maggie Gee *The Ice People*
* Kate Grenville *The Idea of Perfection*
* Patricia Highsmith *The Two Faces of January*
* Franz Kafka *Complete short stories*
* Guy de Maupassant *Short stories*
* Ann Patchett *Bel Canto*
* Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things*
* Marjane Satrapi *Persepolis*
* Art Spiegelman *Maus*
* Ali Smith *There but for the/ Hotel World/The Accidental*

FRENCH

* Renaud de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu* (Paris: Champion, 2003)
* Pierre Ronsard, *Les Amours* (1552-1584), ed. Marc Bensimon and James L. Martin (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1981)
*Sonnets pour Hélène*, Books I and II (pp. 261-314)
* Racine, *Phèdre*, ed. Christian Delmas and Georges Forestier, Collection Folio Théâtre no. 23 (Paris: Gallimard, 1995)
* Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, ed. Joël Papadopoulous, preface by André Malraux, Folio Classique, 894 (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)
* Emile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. Henri Mitterand (Garnier Flammarion, 2008).
* Agnès Varda (director), Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962)

GEOGRAPHY

**Global Issues**

* John Berger [2000]: Lilac and Flag – Bloomsbury Publishing [and the others in the trilogy]
* Tim Butcher [2008]: Blood River - Vintage
* Ma Jian [2002]: Red Dust –Vintage
* Patrick French [2011]: India. A Portrait - Allen Lane
* Ma Jian [2009]: Beijing Coma - Vintage
* Eric Schlosser [2002]: Fast Food Nation: What the All American Meal is Doing to the World - Penguin
* Duncan Hewitt [2007}: Getting Rich First – Chatto & Windus
* Jung Chiang [2004]: Wild Swans – Harper Perennial
* Dave Gorman [2008]: America Unchained – Ebury Press
* Jonathan Watts [2010]: When a Billion Chinese Jump – Faber & Faber
* Joe Bennett [2010]: Where Underpants Come From: From Checkout to Cotton Field – Travels Through the New China – Profile Books.
* Mark Edwards [2009]: Hard Rain – Hardrainproject
* Richard Wrangham [2010]: Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human – Profile Books
* Fred Pearce [2009]: Confessions of an Eco Sinner: Travels to Where My Stuff Comes From – Eden Project Books
* Fred Pearce [2007]: When the Rivers Run Dry: What happens When Our Water Runs Out? – Eden Project Books
* Fred Pearce [2010] People Quake: Mass Migration, Ageing nations and the Coming Population Crash – Eden Project
* Mike Berners-Lee [2010]: How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything – Profile Books
* Charles Clover [2005]: The End of the Line. How Overfishing is Changing The World and What We Eat - Ebury Press.
* Mark Kurlansky [2009]: The Last Fish Tale - Jonathan Cape
* Nicolas Stern: [2009]: A Blueprint for a Safer Planet - Bodley Head

**Physical environments and human/societal responses**

* Douglas Brinkley [2007]: The great deluge – Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast – Harper
* Sebastian Junger [2006]: The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea - Harper
* Erich Krauss [2005]: Wave of Destruction: One Thai Village and its Battle with the Tsunami – VISION paperbacks
* Mike Davis [1998]: Ecology of Fear – Vintage
* James Lovelock [1979]: Gaia, a new look at life on Earth – OUP; [2006]: The Revenge of Gaia – Penguin
* James Lovelock [2010]: The Vanishing Face of Gaia; A final warning - Basic Books
* Al Gore [2006]: An Inconvenient Truth –Bloomsbury
* Richard Girling [2008]: Sea Change: Britain's Coastal Catastrophe - Eden Project Books
* Simon Winchester [2004]: Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded: August 27, 1883
* Mark Lynas [2008]: Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet
* George Monbiot [2007]: Heat: How We Can Stop the Planet Burning
* Bjorn Lomberg [2003]: The Skeptical Environmentalist - CUP
* Bjorn Lomborg [2009]: Cool it: The sceptical environmentalist's guide to global warming
* Craig Leland Childs [2002]: The Desert Cries
* Ian Stewart & John Lynch [2007]: Earth – The Power of the Planet - BBC Books
* Ian Stewart [2004]: Journeys from the Centre of the Earth - Century
* Martin Rees [2003]: Our Final Century Will Civilisation Survive the Twenty First Century? - Arrow Books
* James Hansen [2009]: Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe - Bloomsbury
* Elizabeth Kolbert [2007]: Field Notes From a Catastrophe A Frontline Report on Climate Change - Bloomsbury
* Mark Lynas [2004]: High Tide News from a Warming World - Flamingo
* Robert Does [2006]: Extreme Floods A History in a Changing Climate - Sutton Publishing
* Stephen Halliday [2004]: Water A Turbulent History - The History Press
* Brian M Fagan [2001]: The Little Ice Age: Howe Climate made History 1300-1850 – Basic Books

**Human Environments**

* Bee Wilson [2009]: Swindled: From Poison Sweets to Counterfeit Coffee – John Murray
* Jared Diamond [2005]: Guns, Germs and Steel - Vintage
* Dambisa Moyo [2010]: Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa - Penguin
* Naomi Klein [2010]: No Logo - Fourth Estate
* Naomi Klein [2008]:The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism - Penguin
* William Easterly [2007]: The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest etc…..- OUP
* Paul Collier [2008]: The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It - OUP
* George Monbiot [2008]: Bring on the Apocalypse: Six Arguments for Global Justice - Atlantic Books
* Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman [2005]: Long Way Round - Sphere
* James Kynge [2009]: China Shakes The World: The Rise of the Hungry Nation - Phoenix
* Will Hutton [2008]: The Writing on the Wall: China and the West in the 21st Century - Abacus
* Amy Chua [2004]: World on Fire - Arrow Books
* Roger Boyes [2009]: Meltdown Iceland. Howe the Global Financial Crisis Bankrupted an Entire Country – Bloomsbury
* John Lanchester [2010]: Whoops!: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay – Penguin

**Maps, Cartography and Exploration**

* Andrew Taylor [2005]: The World of Gerald Mercator: the Mapmaker Who Revolutionised Geography - Harper
* Simon Winchester [2002]: The Map that Changed the World: A Tale of Rocks, Ruin and Redemption - Penguin
* The British Library Publishing Division [2010]: Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art - British Library
* John Keay [2010]: The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India Was Mapped and Everest was Named – HarperCollins

**Urbanisation**

* Mike Davis [2007]: Planet of Slums – Verso; [2004]: Dead Cities -The New Press; [1998]: City of Quartz - Pimlico
* Douglas Franz & Catherine Collins [2000]: - Celebration, U.S.A. : Living in Disney’s Brave New Town - Owl Books
* Raymond Barrett [2010]: Dubai Dreams: Inside the Kingdom of Bling – Nicholas Brealey Publishers
* Joe Tatchell [2010]; A Diamond in the Desert: Behind the Scenes in the World’s Richest City – Sceptre

**Trade and Globalisation**

* Alan Beattie [2009]: False Economy. A Surprising Economic History of the World - Penguin
* Kelsey Timmerman [2010]: Where am I Wearing? A Global Tour to the Counties, Factories, and People that Make Our Clothes – John Wiley & Sons
* Piertra Rivoli [2009]: The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade – John Wiley & Sons.
* Eduardo Galeano [2001]: The World Upside Down. A Primer for the Looking Glass World - Picador
* Eduardo Galeano [2009]: Mirrors: Stories of Almost Everyone - Nation Book
* Antony Wild [2010]: Black Gold: The Dark History of Coffee – Harper Perennial
* Mathew Hart [2001]: Diamond. The History of a Cold Blooded Affair - Fourth Estate
* Barbara Freese [2003]: Coal. A Human History - Arrow Books
* Hattie Ellis [2007]: Planet Chicken. The Shameful Story of the Bird on Our Plate - Sceptre
* Carol Helstosky [2008]: Pizza. A Global History - Reaktion Books
* John Griffitth [2007]: Tea: The Drink That Changed the World. Andre Deutsch
* John Reader [2009]: The Untold Story of the Potato –Vintage.
* Mark Kurlandsky [2003]: Salt. A World History - Penguin
* Mark Kurlansky [1998]: Cod. The Biography of the Fish that Changed the World – Penguin
* Elizabeth Abbott [2010]: Sugar: A Bittersweet History – Gerald Duckworth
* Andrew Simms [2007]: Tescopoly – how one shop came out on top and why it matters – Constable

GERMAN

* Hammer's German Grammar - Martin Durrell
* Essential German Grammar - Durrell, Kohl and Loftus
* Practising German Grammar - Durrell, Kohl and Loftus

**Historical, cultural, literary and linguistic background reading:**

* A Concise History of Germany - Mary Fulbrook
* German Thought and Culture from the Holy Roman Empire to the Present Day - H.-J. Hahn
* Germany and the Germans - John Ardagh
* The German Language in a Changing Europe - Michael Clyne
* The Friendly German-English Dictionary. A Guide to German Language, Culture and Society through Faux Amis, Literary Illustration and Other Diversions - Fred Bridgham
* The Oxford Companion to German Literature - H.B. Garland and Mary Garland

**Literary works:**

* Die Verwandlung; Der Prozess - Franz Kafka
* Der Vorleser - Bernhard Schlink
* Der Tod in Venedig – Thomas Mann
* Effi Briest – Theodor Fontane
* Andorra - Max Frisch
* Woyzeck - Georg Buchner
* Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder - Bertholt Brecht
* Der Besuch der alten Dame; Die Physiker - Friedrich Dürrenmatt
* You might also like to read a variety of Gedichte (Poetry) by Heine, Brecht and Gryphius

**Films**

* Sophie Scholl - Die letzten Tage - Marc Rothemund
* Das Leben der Anderen - Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck
* Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei - Hans Weingartner
* Good Bye Lenin! - Wolfgang Becker
* Lola rennt - Tom Tykwer
* Der Untergang - Oliver Hirschbiegel

HISTORY

* Stalingrad, Anthony Beevor
* The English Civil Wars, Blair Worden
* The First World War, AJP Taylor
* Cadillac Desert: The American West, Marc Reisner
* A Legacy of Conquest: The American West: Patricia Nelson Limerick
* The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America, James Wilson
* The Shadow of the Winter Palace: the Drift to Revolution 1825-1917, Russia, Edward Crankshaw
* Joan of Arc, a History, Helen Castor
* The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, William Shirer
* Crazy Horse and Custer, Stephen E. Ambrose
* Band of Brothers, Stephen E Ambrose
* The First Crusade, Thomas Asbridge (!)
* Nixonland, Richard Perlstein
* The Arrogance of Power, Richard Nixon, by Anthony Summers
* Primary Colors by Anonymous
* Stalin - Breaker of nations, Robert Service
* The English and their history, Robert Tomb
* Citizens, Simon Schama
* The Third Reich, Michael Burleigh
* The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain, Paul Preston
* Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945. RJB Bosworth
* Gulag a history: Anne Applebaum
* How Britain made the modern world, Niall Ferguson
* She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled Medieval England Before Elizabeth Castor
* Vishnu’s Crowded Temple: India Since the Great Rebellion, Maria Misra
* Common Sense, Thomas Paine
* Conquest: Cortes, Montezuma, and the Fall of Old Mexico, Hugh Thomas
* The History of the Byzantine State, George Ostrogorsky
* The Alexiad, Anna Komnena
* On War, Clausewitz
* Orientalism, Edward Said
* Hagiarism, Patrica Crone and Cook (a challenging and seminal history of Islam)
* Sira, Ibn Ishaq (life of Muhammad)
* The New Testament
* Storm of Steel, Ernst Junger
* Shake Hands With the Devil, Romeo Dallaire
* Tudor England, John Guy
* A Little History of the World, Ernst Gombrich
* The World Turned Upside Down, Christopher Hill
* The Middle Ages Unlocked: A Guide to Life in Medieval England 1050-1300, Dr Gillian Polack and Dr Katrin Kania
* 1848: Year Of Revolution, Mike Rapport
* 1946: The Making of the Modern World, Victor Sebestyen
* The Complete MAUS, Art Spiegelman
* Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi
* The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence, Martin Meredith

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

* Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainsley, 2009, *Understanding International Relations* (4th edition); Palgrave Macmillan
* Jussi Hanhimaki, Joseph A. Maiolo, Kirsten Schulze, and Anthony Best, 2008, *An International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (2nd edition); Routledge
* Henry Kissinger, 1994, *Diplomacy*; Simon & Schuster
* James Mayall, 2000, *World Politics: Progress and its Limits*; Polity
* Adam Watson, 1992, *The Evolution of International Society*; Routledge

LAW (taken from the Oxford University suggested introductory reading list)

* A Bradney and others, *How to Study Law* (5th edition, Sweet and Maxwell, 2005)
* T Murphy and S Roberts, *Understanding Property Law* (4th edition, Sweet and Maxwell, 2004)
* C Ganz, *Understanding Public Law* (3rd edition, Sweet and Maxwell,2001)
* J Adams and R Brownsword, *Understanding Law* (4th edition, Sweet and Maxwell,2006)
* J Adams and R Brownsword, *Understanding Contract Law* (4th edition, Sweet and Maxwell, 2004)
* C Clarkson, *Understanding Criminal Law* (4th edition, Sweet and Maxwell, 2005)
* AW Simpson, *Invitation to Law* (Blackwells, 1993)
* Smith and Bailey, *Modern English Legal System*s (Sweet & Maxwell, 4th edition, 2001) Part I

MATHS

* *Cabinet* *of Curiosities*, Ian Stewart
* *Maths in The Simpsons*, Simon Singh
* *Fermat's Last Theorem*, Simon Singh
* *The Music of the Prime,* Marcus du Sautoy
* *Mathermatics: a Very Short Introduction*, Timothy Gowers
* *The Man Who Loved Only Numbers*, Paul Hoffman
* *How to Think like a Mathematician*, Kevin Houston

MUSIC

**Approaches to Contemporary Music**

* Cox, Cristoph and Warner, Daniel [eds.]. 2006. Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music. New York and London: Continuum.
* Ross, Alex. 2008.The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century. London: Fourth Estate.
* Clarke, Donald. 1995.The Rise and Fall of Popular Music. London: Penguin.

**Creative Music Technology**

* Hosken, Dan. An Introduction to Music Technology  (Routledge Ltd, 2011)

**Performance: Techniques & Repertory**

* Klickstein, G. (2009). The Musician’s Way: A guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness
* Rink, J. (2002).Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
* Salmon, P. G. & Meyer, R. G. (1992).Notes from the Green Room: Coping with Stress and Anxiety in Musical Performance. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey Bass Wiley

**Western Art Music**

* Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, Claude V. Palisca. A History of Western Music, 8th edition (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2009)
* Cook, Nicholas. Music. A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: OUP, 2000)
* Claude V. Palisca (ed.),Norton Anthology of Western Music, 2nd edition, vol. 1: Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque; vol. 2: Classic, Romantic, Modern (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1988)

**Popular Music: History, Style & Technique**

* Borthwick, Stuart, and Moy, Ron. 2004. Popular Music Genres: An Introduction. Edinburgh University Press
* Milner, Greg. 2010. Perfecting Sound Forever: The Story of Recorded Music. London: Granta.

**Analytical and Contextual Studies**

* Frith, Simon. 1998. Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

PHILOSOPHY

* Plato’s - *Republic*
* Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*
* Rene Descartes – *Meditations on First Philosophy*
* David Hume - *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*
* John Stuart Mill – *On Liberty*
* Jean-Paul Sartre – *Existentialism and Humanism*
* Bertrand Russell – *The Problems of Philosophy*
* A J Ayer – *Language, Truth and Logic*
* Tim Crane – *The Mechanical Mind*
* Simon Blackburn – *What do we really know? The Big Questions of Philosophy*
* Simon BlackbUrn - *Think*
* Thomas Nagel – *What Does it all Mean?*

PHYSICS

* Fear of Physics, Lawrence Krauss
* The Fifth Miracle, Paul Davies
* Black Holes, Wormholes and Time Machines, Jim Al-Khalili
* Schrodingers Kittens, John Gribbin
* The New Quantum Universe, Tony Hey and Patrick Walters
* Splitting the Second, Tony Jones
* Surely You’re Joking Mr Feynman, Richard P Feynman
* The Collapse of Chaos, Jack Cohen & Ian Stewart
* Introducing the Universe, Felix Pirani & Christine Roche
* Longitude, Dava Sobel
* Particle Physics – a Very Short Introduction, Frank Close
* Six Easy Pieces, Richard Feynman
* Introducing Quantum Theory, McEvoy and Zarate
* QED, Richard Feynman
* How to Dunk a Doughnut, Len Fisher
* Light and Dark, David Greene
* The Elegant Universe, Brian Greene
* Quantum Physics: A Beginner's Guide, Alastair I.M. Rae
* 50 Physics Ideas You Really Need to Know, Joanne Baker
* The Fabric of the Cosmos, Brian Greene
* Mr Tompkins in Paperback, George Gamow
* The Physics of Superheroes, James Kakalios
* Wrinkles In Time – The Imprint of Creation, George Smoot and Keay Davidson
* Big Bang, Simon Singh
* Why does *E*=*mc*2?, Brian Cox
* How the Universe Will End, Brian Cox

POLITICS

**Democracy & General**

* David Miller – Democracy: A Very Short Introduction
* Fareed Zakaria – The Future of Freedom
* Robert Dahl – On Democracy
* Daron Acemoğlu – Why Nations Fail
* Dan Jellinek – People Power: A user's guide to democracy
* John Dunn – Setting the People Free
* Anthony King – Who Governs Britain?

**Human Rights**

* Andrew Clapham – Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction
* Michael Freeman – Human Rights
* Shami Chakrabati – On Liberty
* Juane Mendez – Taking a Stand: The Evolution of Human Rights
* Tom Bingham – Rule of Law

**International Relations, War & Terrorism**

* Paul Wilkinson – International Relations: A Very Short Introduction
* Steven Roach – International Relations: The Key Concepts
* Kenneth Waltz – Man, the State, and War
* Samuel Huntington – Clash of Civilizations
* Noam Chomsky – Who rules the world?
* Charles Townshend – Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction
* Ken Booth – Terror in Our Time
* Eric Hobsbawm – Age of Extremes The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991
* Matthew Levitt – Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad
* Niccolo Machiavelli – The Prince
* Graham Allison – Destined for War: can America and China escape Thucydides’s Trap?
* Jeremy Isaacs – Cold War: For Forty-five Years the World Held its Breath

**Sociology & Anthropology**

* Jared Diamond – Guns, Germs and Steel: A short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years
* Yuval Noah Harari – Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind
* Tim Marshall – Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics
* Ernst Gellner – Nations and Nationalism
* Jonathan Haidt – The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion

**Political Philosophy**

* David Miller – Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction
* Jean-Jacques Rousseau – The Social Contract
* John Stuart-Mill – On Liberty
* Robert Nozick – Anarchy, State, and Utopia
* John Rawls – A Theory of Justice
* Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – The Communist Manifesto
* Thomas Hobbes – The Leviathan
* Plato – The Republic
* Amartya Sen – Development as Freedom

**Regional Politics**

* Dambisa Moyo – Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa
* Martin Meredith – The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence
* Adam Hochschild – King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa
* Louise Fawcett – International Relations of the Middle East
* Steven Crook – False Dawn: Protest, Democracy, and Violence in the New Middle East
* James Barr – A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the struggle that shaped the Middle East
* Paul Ginsborg – Italy and its Discontents 1980-2001: Family, Civil Society, State
* Martin Bull – Italian Politics: Adjustment Under Duress
* Ramachandra Guha – India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy
* Ernesto Che Guevara – The Motorcycle Diaries: Notes on a Latin American Journey
* Kim MacQuarrie – Life and Death in the Andes: On the Trail of Bandits, Heroes, and Revolutionaries
* John Pinder – The European Union: A Very Short Introduction
* Tony Judt – Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945
* Mary Sarotte – 1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe
* Philip Golub – East Asia's Reemergence
* Tom Miller – China's Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road

PSYCHOLOGY

* Ramachandran, V.S & Blakeslee S. *Phantoms in the Brain: Human Nature and the Architecture of the Mind*
* Dennett, D.C. *Consciousness Explained*
* Greenfield, S., *The Private Life of the Brain*
* Ridley, M., *Nature via Nurture: Genes, Experience and What Makes us Human*
* Pinker, S., *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind*
* Goldacre, B., *Bad Science*
* Shriver, Lionel, *We Need To Talk About Kevin*
* Rachel Herz, *That’s Disgusting*
* Brophy, K., *We Need to Talk About Kevin by Lionel Shriver*
* Byron, T., *Skeleton Cupboard - the Making of a Clinical Psychologist*
* Davis, O., *Psychology Uncovered*
* Dinos, S. and Tsakopoulou, M., *Becoming a Psychologist*
* Frith, C., *Making up the Mind*
* Grosz, S., *The Examined Life*
* Jericho, J., *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness & the Secret Sharer*
* Marzillier, J., *The Gossamer Thread*
* Milgram, S., *Obedience to Authority*
* Mischel, W., *The Marshmallow Test*
* Perry, G., *Behind the Shock Machine*
* Pinker, S., *The Blank Slate*
* Rymer, R., *Genie: a Scientific Tragedy*
* Sacks, O., *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*
* Taleb, N., *Black Swan*
* Ward, J., *The Student's Guide to Social Neuroscience*
* Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*
* Zimbardo, P., *The Lucifer Effect*

SCIENCE

* Akhavan, Jacqueline, *The Chemistry of Explosives*
* Aldersey-Williams, Hugh, *Periodic Tales: The Curious Lives of the Elements*
* Aldridge, Susan, *Magic Molecules – How Drugs Work*
* Atkins, P. W., *Four Laws that Drive the Universe*
* Atkins, P. W., *The Periodic Kingdom – a Journey into the Land of the Chemical Elements*
* Atkins, P. W., *Reactions: The Private Life of Atoms*
* Burreson, Jay and Le Couteur, Penny, *Napoleon’s Buttons*
* Emsley, John, *The Consumer's Good Chemical Guide, Separating Facts from Fiction about Everyday Products*
* Emsley, John, *Better Looking, Better Living, Better Loving: How Chemistry can help you Achieve Life's Goals*
* Emsley, John, *Molecules of Murder: Criminal Molecules and Classic Murders*
* Emsley, John, *Molecules at an Exhibition: Portraits of Intriguing Materials in Everyday Life*
* Goldacre, Ben, *Bad Science*
* Jaffe, Bernard, *Crucibles: The Story of Chemistry*
* Kean, Sam, *The Disappearing Spoon*
* Lane, Nick, *Oxygen: The Molecule that Made the World*
* Parry, Vivienne, *The Truth About Hormones*
* Russell, Michael S, *The Chemistry of Fireworks*
* Sacks, Oliver, *Uncle Tungsten – Memories of a Chemical Boyhood*
* Selinger, Ben, *Chemistry in the Market Place*

SOCIOLOGY

* Anthony Giddens, 2009, *Sociology* (6th edition); Polity
* Zygmunt Bauman, 2001, *Thinking Sociologically* (2nd edition); Polity
* Anthony Smith, 1995, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era;* Polity R W Connell, 2009, Gender (2nd edition); Polity
* Richard Sennett, 1999, *The Corrosion of Character*; W W Norton

SPANISH

Ideally you would read these texts in Spanish, but it’s fine to read some (not all) in English, particularly the harder ones (like Lazarillo). Some of these texts exist in dual-language editions, with Spanish on the left and an English translation on the right. Others (e.g. Manchester University Press) have vocabulary lists at the bottom of each page or at the back to help you with the harder words that Sixth Formers wouldn’t be expected to know. The key is to ensure that you are able to quote in the target language, and refer to key characters and events as they are written in the text, rather than an English translation.

* Mario Vargas Llosa – *La tía Julia y el escribidor*
* Isabel Allende – *La casa de los espíritus*
* Anónimo – *Lazarillo de Tormes*
* Ramón Sender – *Réquiem por un campesino español*
* Federico García Lorca – *La casa de Bernarda Alba, Bodas de Sangre*
* Federico García Lorca – *Romancero gitano, Poeta en Nueva York*
* Gabriel García Márquez – *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*
* Gabriel García Márquez – *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*
* Pablo Neruda – *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*
* Eduardo Mendoza – *Sin noticias de Gurb*
* Unamuno – *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*
* Pedro Almodóvar – *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*
* Pedro Almodóvar –*¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?*
* Pedro Almodóvar – *Alejandro Amenábar – Mar adentro*

THEOLOGY

* Augustine – *Confessions*
* Gerd Theissen – *The Shadow of the Galilean*
* Michael Coogan – *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*
* Dietrich Bonhoeffer *– Letters and Papers from Prison*
* David Ford – *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*
* Jonathan Sacks – *The Dignity of Difference*
* Reza Aslan – *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution and Future of Islam*
* Mickelthwait, J., & Wooldridge, A., *God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World* (Allen Lane, 2009)
* Ronald Dworkin, *Religion Without God*
* Brian Davies – An introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (3rd Edition)
* Richard Swinburne – Is there a God?

# Example Personal Statements

**Successful candidate’s personal statement: Philosophy, Politics and Economics**

I have long been interested in the unexamined assumption that free market economics is the sole paradigm through which world politics is viewed. I wish to question the permanence of this system and try to understand why there exist so few alternatives, among them the state socialism of old and reborn Keynesianism. I wondered whether this dominance of economics in our political institutions, and increasingly our societies, is necessary. My deep interest in discovering the complex pathways to social justice has fuelled my love for the interdisciplinary subjects of Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

Michael Sandel’s ‘Justice’ offered me a gateway into some of Philosophy’s greatest minds striving towards a similar goal, and his lecture ‘Markets and Morals’ furthered my questioning about the predominance of the market society and the creeping monetisation, not just of goods, but even of values and attitudes: what can be classified as a commodity, and can the market provide the key to distributive justice? My study of Economics has demonstrated the dominance of theories rooted in rational choice, such as those espoused by Milton Friedman, whose theories were described in Niall Ferguson’s ‘The Ascent of Money’. However, the most powerful book I have read- ‘The Shock Doctrine’by Naomi Klein- condemns ‘disaster capitalism’, championed by Friedman, and offered an alternative and, in my view, more sophisticated explanation of contemporary Politics and Economics.

In turn, economic and political disciplines are based on broader ideas about morality, ethics and what it means to live a happy and fulfilled life. Gaining insight from the Theory of Knowledge part of the IB course, whilst participating in a student-led philosophy club, I have thoroughly enjoyed contrasting the ideas about justice and society from the likes of Plato to John Stuart Mill to Karl Marx. I believe it is the amalgamation of the three subjects that will contribute to our ability to understand what constitutes a fairer society, and it is my dream that, through my study of PPE, I will add to this debate.

My love of combining Philosophy with Politics and Economics led me to attend a lecture entitled ‘Decent Capitalism: What Protestors Should Protest For’ and, alongside books such as Ha-Joon Chang’s ‘23 Things They Don’t Tell You About Capitalism’, I attempted to achieve greater understanding of the expanding inequality in a neoliberal age. However, it is the absence of definite answers in all three subjects that is one of the reasons I would relish the chance to study this combined course.

Fuelled by my curiosity in the different means to effect positive and sustainable change, I volunteered at the Rio+20 Earth Summit with an NGO specialising in environment and development issues. There, I not only saw how governments negotiate international agreements but also how they are politically lobbied by NGOs and, increasingly, by corporations. The experience also made me doubt the ability of democracy as a whole to provide justice, furthered by my reading of Plato’s *The Republic* at the time, making me eager to study PPE in order to explore concepts of power, legitimacy and obligation further.

My voluntary work in the local elections this year, alongside my candidacy in a mock general election emphasised the importance of local communities inside the larger world. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenges both experiences threw at me, particularly engaging in debates with many different people.

I have also been involved in the Young Enterprise scheme where I was Managing Director, winning Best Company in the county. In addition, I am a member of my school choir and am part of the debating team. Reading PPE would serve both my academic and personal commitment to the ideas of justice, and indeed help test my very own assumptions.

**Successful candidate’s personal statement: History**

My love for history is to an extent due to the breadth of the subject. As I am fascinated not only by past events, but also by ideas and concepts, the scope of a history degree is ideal for me. Indeed, in my own independent historical research and reading I have often used interests in other subjects as a starting point; analysis of Horace's 'Odes' led me to research Augustine moral reforms, and in particular, studying political philosophy motivated me to read both volumes of Quentin Skinner's 'The Foundations of Modern Political Thought.' I found these books fascinating; Skinner's account of the development of modern political vocabulary exposed me to countless lesser-known theorists that had thitherto been unknown to me. This served to contextualise the great works of political theory, whilst also giving a genuinely historical survey of the purpose and impact of political and indeed religious thought. Inspired by Skinner, my IB Extended Essay addressed the question of whether there is a connexion between an individual's possession of liberty and the form of government that he or she lives under. I thus contrasted the 'negative' definition of liberty most commonly accepted currently in political thought, that of liberty meaning freedom from coercion, with the earlier 'republican' definition of liberty as freedom from domination in all its forms. Whilst my essay was concerned with a philosophical analysis of the topic, in my research towards it I realised the significance that the debate over these two definitions acquired during the English Civil War and the Interregnum. I was then motivated to study Hobbes' 'Leviathan' as a historical source, and came to appreciate how the book is not only an important political treatise, but also an important manifestation of the shift from humanist to scientific modes of thought in the seventeenth century.

Finding the period hugely interesting, I sought to learn more about the English Civil War. Whilst previously I had only understood the event simplistically as a revolutionary struggle between the crown and the propertied classes, Christopher Hill's 'The World Turned Upside Down,' an account of the civil war from 'the worm's eye view,' introduced me to a myriad of revolutionary groups, political and religious, that astounded me with the radicalism of their beliefs and their actions. Wanting to read more social and political history written from this position, I read E.P. Thompson's 'The Making of the English Working Class.' In reading this I was struck not only by Thompson's palpable admiration for working class agency, but also the sympathy with which he viewed regressive groups such as the Luddites . His perspective was a welcome contrast to that of other works of Marxist history that I had previously read, such as E.J. Hobsbawm's 'The Age of Revolution,' which I found to be insensitive towards the plight of individuals at times.

Just as the study of ideas is important because ideas exhibit much about the society that gives rise to them, I believe that art and music can serve the same revelatory purpose for the historian. It is my hope that in my future studies, I might employ my understanding of music as a historical skill, using the medium to better appreciate historical contexts. Outside my academic studies, my great love is performing and listening to music, both choral and orchestral. I have achieved a grade 8 distinction in both the trombone and in singing, and I hope to complete a performance diploma in the latter this coming year. Having played and sung in many groups and choirs throughout my time at school, now during my gap year I sing regularly with my church choir and a local choral society, and I intend to continue singing at university. This year I will also be working, with the intention of funding future study, whilst also taking the opportunity outside of formal education to develop my academic interests. In particular, I hope to improve my Latin comprehension.

**Successful candidate’s personal statement: Human Social and Political Sciences**

The fundamental questions posed in political theory intrigue me, introducing the exciting possibility of scepticism about established concepts that I had previously assumed to be indubitable. In particular, I am attracted to the arguments of Hobbes and Locke on the "State of Nature", and investigated this further by reading extracts of "Leviathan" and "Two Treatises of Government". This approach to the basis of government interests me as it suggests that political theory are inherently connected to human thought and behaviour. I am also drawn to the way in which theories are proposed and deconstructed through argument and rhetoric instead of pure logic. I feel that to discuss theories with such broad consequences, one must take the emotional perspective into consideration. However, I also enjoy the challenge of arguing for an opposing viewpoint to my own, as it often exposes a new way of interpreting the problem. This interest in assessing both sides of an argument has also proved a valuable asset in the school debating society.

My studies in Economics, specifically the issues within macroeconomics, have also contributed to my understanding of the role of the government, especially in maintaining and controlling our economy. This prompted further questions on authority, legitimacy and even each individual's power in our society. Reading "Introducing Social Theory", by Pip Jones, developed my appreciation of the relationship between politics and economics through the ideas of Marx. His theories of the mode of production being a factor in producing political advantage showed me the exciting links between politics and other disciplines. In particular, the idea of the media as a tool of repression used by a dominant class fascinated me.

My understanding of social influences as factors that are important in determining decisions has been broadened through my A Level English Literature course. I have learnt to recognise and evaluate the effects of social, political and historical contexts in literature. This knowledge of the historical environment in which a text is written exposes a deeper understanding of the subject matter. In fact, reading "The Hidden Wiring", by Peter Hennessy, has illustrated to me that even political systems can be defined by their history, as seems to be the case in Britain.

I was lucky enough to be able to explore the role of the media while working for DNX Marketing in the summer, where I gained a deeper understanding of how the industry works. Using media to change people's perceptions of products requires an understanding of the contributing factors in order for the advertising to be effective. The research included in David Brooks' "The Social Animal" suggests to me that these factors are not individual, but influenced in a large degree by one's social groups and society. Clearly this sociological perspective is important in any area of social science, and is an interpretation that I find both challenging and rewarding.

In addition to my studies, I also enjoy playing in the Jazz Band, but with Grade 8 Jazz Saxophone and Jazz Flute I also enjoy solo improvisation. As well as my musical commitments, I have taken on the challenge of directing Alan Bennett's "The History Boys" for a local festival, having performed in many productions myself. I was inspired to this by proving my leadership as Deputy Managing Director of a successful Young Enterprise company. I also enjoyed the physical challenge and camaraderie of a two-day canoeing expedition as training for the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. Having always maintained an enthusiasm for learning, I look forward to developing my thinking about the extensive issues that the social sciences seek to illuminate.

**Successful candidate’s personal statement: Linguistics**

Language and its constructions are numinous. I think they hold a kind of magic; they allow us to convey whatever meaning we choose, from the depths of philosophy to the frivolity of flirtation. It is this awe-inspiring element of language that first drew me in: the ability to communicate a plethora of meanings with the rigid limitations placed on our vocal capacity. It seems that humanity has always been fixated by words; it is a beautiful thing how all words are, by necessity, coloured by the past, whether they are constructed out of ancient concepts, or are reinvented in our modern world and take on a new meaning.

My interest has grown further and I am now fascinated by the relationship between language and society, inspired by William Labov’s study of English in New York. I find it fascinating that the mere pronunciation of a liquid ‘r’ consonant could decide your social standing and that just one letter had prestige attached to it. Seeing that society has placed certain connotations on each dialectical feature seemed obvious once studied; yet it was the specific investigation of individual letters that created a desire in me to find out more about the science of language, as opposed to the magic that I originally only saw. Because we take language for granted so often, I am so pleased that linguistics can allow me an insight into the tiniest of details, which affect our lives and the whole of society.

I have also developed a love of grammar. The system of rules by which all phrases and sentences are governed and formed to make sense to humans intrigues me, originating from my Latin studies. Chomsky’s theory of Universal Grammar made me ask questions about how we learn these rules. Without any reading I naturally assumed that we simply learn language and its structure as we grow, but Chomsky opened my eyes by stating that we are born with rules for language imbedded in us. Whilst I am still unsure about Chomsky’s theory, I do believe that humans are born with a need for language. Thinking cynically, humans communicate to get what we want, and language facilitates that.

From David Crystal’s ‘How Language Works’, published in November 2006, I have acquired some knowledge of the basics of linguistics, but this is not enough for me. I want understanding, not merely knowledge, and nothing seems better to me than to be able to approach a sentence both to understand its general implication and, more importantly, to appreciate the hidden messages and nuances behind each word. I would love to investigate further the semantics of language: how we can find sense and meaning in a seemingly nonsensical stream of sound amazes me. It is fascinating to see the vast array of meanings that can be conveyed using a speech act and even more astounding to note the context-dependent messages a listener could interpret from an implicit utterance.

Alongside my passion for linguistics, I am captivated by singing. Accompanying my choral and examined singing, of grade 8 standard, I have had lessons with the Assistant Director of Operatic Studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. I am a School Prefect, as well as having grade 8 flute and bronze D of E completed. Yet my personality is undoubtedly dominated by my love of language.

**Successful candidate’s personal statement: Physics**

Physics and maths have always struck a chord in me, keeping my mind buzzing with ideas and problems, questions to answer. What angle of elevation gives a projectile the furthest reach? How can the mathematical constant *e* be calculated? How can we find the mass of the earth? Over time as I have built on the problem solving tools available to me more of the answers have revealed themselves; differentiation provides a neat solution to the first question, taking limits reveals the workings of e, and an understanding of gravitational force unlocks the mass of the earth. We live in an incredibly vast universe, which is for the most part a mystery to us, built on rules we cannot yet claim to fully comprehend, and in my view seeking to understand all the complexities around us is what I believe physics is really about; constantly pushing the boundaries in the continual search for an absolute truth, if one indeed does exist.

Among the books I have read are “A Brief History of Time” by S. Hawking, “QED” by R. Feynman and “Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction” by J. Polkinghorne, all of which go some way to explaining the fascinating workings of quantum theory, and “Why does E=mc²” by J. Forshaw, which more than the rest focuses on special and general relativity, and provides an excellent presentation of spacetime. Although all these books have areas of specialisation, the fact that they overlapped was valuable in giving me a more complete understanding of what each has to offer, especially “QED” and “Quantum Theory”, which both take different routes to explain phenomena such as the exclusion principle, antimatter, and probability amplitudes.

Something else that interests me is the way in which many momentous discoveries were a result of thought experiments, or the maths producing unforeseen results; ranging from the uncertainty principle, to the prediction of the positron by Dirac. This emphasis on maths has led me to teach myself the chapter on “Infinite Series” in “Mathematical Methods in the Physical Sciences” by M. Boas. I also attended a Maths course at Trinity, Oxford, which included fascinating lectures on solving cubic equations, and the Basel problem. As well as maths and physics, I also study A level chemistry, computing, and further maths. This combination of subjects has given me a broader understanding of physics, for example the quantum aspect of energy levels in chemistry. I enjoy the coding aspect of computing, and one of the things I look forward to is being able to conduct experiments with my own coded programs, where I hope to get to grips with phenomena such as super conductance and lasers.

For five weeks during the summer holidays I worked at Schlumberger House, a geophysical surveying company, on a placement in which I tested and fine-tuned their data processing systems. This involved migrating ultrasonic survey data from two way travel time to depth, giving me an insight to the use of physics in industry.

Beyond my academic studies I play hockey for the school 2nd XI team, and I have a number of sailing qualifications. I am currently awaiting approval of my Silver Duke of Edinburgh award, and I am in the process of completing the Gold. I especially enjoy the expeditions, tackling a physical challenge together with a group of similar minded people. I have also recently been elected a prefect by the pupil and staff body, and was a member of a very successful company that took part in the Young Enterprise programme, qualifying for the South of England finals.

Although I am now beginning to discover the solutions to some of the puzzles of physics, further study has presented me with a whole host of fascinating new problems. What is matter? How can a world of quantum mechanics give rise to classical mechanics? Can general relativity and quantum theory mesh? To read physics at university is for me the next step in the search for the answers.

**Successful candidate’s personal statement: Earth Sciences**

The study of the Earth's composition, its dynamics and destructive nature fascinate me. Physical geography has opened my eyes to the fact that there is so much more to our planet than I first thought. Since my interest has evolved in the subject, I now enjoy reading 'Gideon Mantell and the Discovery of Dinosaurs' by Dennis R. Dean which includes the discovery of the Iguanondon close to my home, to 'When Yellowstone Explodes' by Joel Achenbach. I was very interested to explore the geology of my locality. Using a geographical map I identified how even my area was geologically significant with ancient sandstone outcrops, such as those visible at Wakehurst Place, West Sussex. The introduction to cartography and the understanding of how these were initially drawn, influenced my decision to read 'The Map that Changed the World' by Simon Winchester. I was surprised to learn that despite William Smith's great efforts he had initially been overlooked by his peers. I believe that his legacy has been of great importance to economic geology especially in the coal mining industry. Earthquakes and volcanology are the two areas of study which really enthuse me. Having read articles from 'Achenbach' and 'What's in Yellowstone's future?' from USGS about Yellowstone's caldera in the USA, I am amazed to see how a volcano of such scale was hidden under the park without anyone realising this until 1870, when it was identified by Gustavus Doane. The comparison of Yellowstone to Kilauea in Hawaii, which is probably the world's most active volcano, really intrigues me, as it identifies the different forms of volcanoes that are present. These volcanoes and their historic activity led me to learn more about how geophysicists monitor this area. As a consequence I was introduced to seismology and discovered more about its other practical uses. Having read 'Seismology and Oil' from the Seismological Observatory in Bergen Norway, which shows how oil companies use reflection seismology to identify possible oil deposits, I followed up this interest and obtained an internship with Schlumberger over the summer, for five weeks, working within the seismic data processing team for marine surveys. During my time there I was keen to learn more about the different physical properties of the rock types, understanding why some reflected noise is of greater amplitude to others and why there were discontinuities in the data. More recently, as a result of my personal interest in tectonic activity, I am conducting some research to explore earthquakes in England. Despite the tremors being low on the Richter Scale I am keen to explore why they still occur despite our distant location from any major plate boundary. One paper I have read is 'British earthquakes' by Roger Musson. This explores the historic and possible theories behind the earthquakes, which will guide my research.

Apart from my studies I have successfully completed my Gold Duke of Edinburgh award and all other levels. I also participated in Young Enterprise as Financial director where we won the Sussex County title. I am also an independent person who has shown dedication to complete a half-marathon for charity under a time of 1h30m. As well as this, I continue to undertake multiple newspaper deliveries on Sunday mornings, which I have done for the past five years. I believe that the knowledge I have from both Maths and Physics at A-Level particularly the topics of waves, Newton's laws, magnetic fields and calculus will provide me with the grounding required to study a subject that I have never been formally taught and I cannot wait to explore this vastly diverse subject which is on everyone's door-step.