

Cambridge Writers, 1848-2020: From Wordsworth to J.H. Prynne

Overview:

This course offers a gentle introduction to the lives and writing of several authors who studied at Cambridge before becoming acclaimed writers. Together, we'll look at Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, and J. H. Prynne, as well as at the different ways we can think about their poems. The course is suitable for all who love reading and requires no specialist knowledge.

We'll begin with an introduction to the Cambridge School of criticism, and the pioneering work of I. A. Richards, who was the first to teach Practical Criticism, known for its rejection of contextual study. The work conducted here will inform our approaches to the poets and novelists we'll meet later in the week. These include Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, and A.S. Byatt. Classes will begin with a short lecture on each topic, before moving on to a seminar-style discussion of the selected extracts.

Students who wish to read some of the longer works in advance are warmly invited to do so; however, there will be no expectation that any of the materials have been met before. All extracts for discussion will be circulated in the classes.

Outline:

1	The Cambridge School: Close reading in theory and practice	Short extracts from I.A. Richards, William Empson, F.R. Leavis, and others.
2	Writing the mind in early Romantic poetry	Extracts from Wordsworth's <i>The Prelude</i>
3	Tennyson and mortality	Extracts from Tennyson's <i>In Memoriam</i> and a selection of shorter poems
4	The dramatic monologue	A selection of dramatic monologues by Tennyson and Browning
5	The postmodern novella, Victoriana, science	Extracts from A.S. Byatt's <i>Morpho Eugenia</i>

Optional Pre-Reading:

Browning, 'My Last Duchess' (this dramatic monologue is easy to find for free using a search engine)

Byatt, 'Morpho Eugenia' in *Angels and Insects* (not available for free online, as it's still in copyright. The book should be available cheaply in book shops, or for free in public libraries)

Tennyson, 'Ulysses', 'Tithonus' (these two dramatic monologues are approximately 40 lines in length, and can be found very easily using a Google search)

Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (available here:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/2987>)

Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (the class will focus on book 1 of the 1805 version, found online for free here: <http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/WORDSWORTH/PRELUDE1805/Download.pdf>)

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