

Medieval Literature Book List*

Compiled by: Dr. Linda Marie Zaerr

- ❑ ***Beowulf***. Trans. Seamus Heaney. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. ISBN 0374111197 (for hardback edition). Original text with facing page translation.
- ❑ ***The Riverside Chaucer***. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. ISBN 0395290317. This is the standard edition of Chaucer's works. Translations don't work out well, but there is a nice Penguin Classics translation of *The Canterbury Tales* (revised 2003), ISBN 0140424385.
- ❑ **John Gower. *Confessio Amantis***. Ed. G.C. Macaulay. 2 vols. London: Oxford UP, 1900. ISBN 7225306 and 7225314. Gently sophisticated, this late fourteenth-century narrative tells the tales of an aged lover as he confesses his sins, to earn his lady's love.
- ❑ ***Piers the Plowman: A Critical Edition of the A-Version***. Ed. T.A. Knott and D.C. Fowler. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1952. ISBN 0801802997. There is also a B and a C version, both much longer. This allegory about what is wrong in contemporary society contains some surprisingly vivid images of life in fourteenth-century England.
- ❑ ***The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript***. Ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron. Exeter: U Exeter P, 2002. ISBN 0859897265 (paperback). 4th ed. The anonymous fourteenth-century poems *Pearl*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in Middle English with useful footnotes and glossary. For an evocative translation, try J.R.R. Tolkien, ISBN 039521970.
- ❑ **Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain***. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. Penguin, 1966. ISBN 0140441700. This early twelfth-century *historia* brings together earlier accounts of King Arthur. Geoffrey was very influential in the sudden twelfth-century flowering of stories about Arthur.
- ❑ ***The Mabinogion***. Trans. Ganz. Penguin, 1976. ISBN 0140443223. These Welsh tales may derive from the same source as some of Chrétien's tales. King Arthur seems ignominious in some of these stories. Be prepared for a different aesthetic of storytelling.
- ❑ ***The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes***. Trans. David Staines. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. ISBN 0253354404. In the twelfth century Chrétien wrote the first story about Lancelot and the first Grail story. Be prepared for complexity, but the stories are also engaging and very direct.
- ❑ ***Lancelot of the Lake***. Trans. Corley. Oxford UP, 1989. ISBN 0192817566. If you want to know more about Lancelot, this anonymous early-thirteenth-century story will provide some astonishing perspectives.
- ❑ ***The Lais of Marie de France***. Trans. Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante. Durham, North Carolina: Labyrinth Press, 1982. ISBN 0939464020. These charming stories from the twelfth century work together to create complex layers of meaning.
- ❑ ***Silence***. Dual-language, trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1999. ISBN 0870135430. In this thirteenth-century French romance, a girl raised as a boy becomes the world's best minstrel and then the world's best knight.
- ❑ **Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. *The Romance of the Rose***. Trans. Frances Horgan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. ISBN 0192826891. This is the ultimate allegory of love. The first part, by Guillaume de Lorris, is more direct; the continuation by Jean de Meun is more drawn out, and it deteriorates to pornography. This thirteenth-century French work had a profound impact.

- ❑ **Christine de Pisan. *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*.** Trans. Sarah Lawson. Penguin Classics. ISBN 014044453X. This early fifteenth-century manual of advice to women is just one of many books by this highly respected writer.
- ❑ ***The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*.** Trans. Betty Radice. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0140442979. Here is a real-life love story from twelfth-century France.
- ❑ **Wolfram von Eschenbach. *Parzival*.** Trans. A.T. Hatto. Penguin Classics, 1980. ISBN 0140443614. This early thirteenth-century German Grail story expresses intriguing anti-crusade perspectives. Parzival can only accomplish his Grail quest together with his Saracen half brother.
- ❑ **Gottfried von Strassburg. *Tristan*.** Trans. A.T. Hatto. Penguin Classics, 1960. ISBN 0140440984. This early thirteenth-century tale of Tristan and Isolde is fundamental to understanding this branch of Arthurian studies. The imagery is highly detailed and evocative.
- ❑ ***The Nibelungenlied*.** Trans. A.T. Hatto. Penguin Classics. ISBN 014044137. This twelfth-century German epic influenced many later literary, artistic, and musical creations.
- ❑ ***Malory: Works*.** Ed, Eugene Vinaver. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971. ISBN 0192812173. **Malory's *Morte Darthur*** is the fifteenth-century English compilation of stories about King Arthur that has been most influential in the centuries since.
- ❑ ***Medieval Drama*.** Ed. David Bevington. Boston: Houghton, 1975. ISBN 0395139155. While this is still the standard edition, it is based on a very limited notion of drama. It does not include Hildegard von Bingen or the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, etc.
- ❑ ***Medieval Comic Tales*.** Ed. Derek Brewer. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Brewer, 1996. ISBN 0859914852. These stories are offensive to many groups of people, and they are morally repellent, but if you can look beyond that they capture a rollicking joy in life and delight in the unexpected.
- ❑ **Boccaccio. *The Decameron*.** Trans. G.H. McWilliam. Penguin Classics, 2003. ISBN 0140449302. One hundred stories (not at all appropriate for children) framed in the time of the plague in fourteenth-century Italy.
- ❑ **Dante. *The Divine Comedy*.** Trans. Dorothy Sayers. Penguin Classics (N.B. There is another translation in the Penguin series). ISBN ***Hell (Inferno)*** 0140440062, ***Purgatory*** 0140440461, ***Paradise*** 0140441050. This translation from the Italian helps you navigate both the historical references and the four levels of allegory, and it captures the excitement of the story.
- ❑ ***The Poem of the Cid*.** A Bilingual edition, ed. Ian Michael, trans. by Rita Hamilton and Janet Perry. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0140444467. This adventure story from late-twelfth-century Spain was based on an eleventh-century historical figure. People with some Spanish background can work through the original text.
- ❑ **Snorri Sturluson. *Edda*.** Trans. Anthony Faulkes. Everyman. ISBN 0460876163. This thirteenth-century Icelandic creation is fascinating and otherworldly in its own right, and it has been strongly influential. Here you will find the names of all Tolkien's dwarfs, descriptions of several of his creatures (including wargs), and a story of a dangerously powerful ring.
- ❑ ***The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*.** Trans. C.W.R.D. Moseley. Penguin Classics, 1983. ISBN 0140444351. This is a useful lesson on perspective. This fourteenth-century account of travel adventures is an astonishing juxtaposition of reality and . . . something else.

- ❑ ***The Arabian Nights***. Trans. Husain Haddawy. Everyman. ISBN 0679413383. While there is no definitive version of *The Arabian Nights*, this edition is not a miscellaneous compilation, but it is based on a specific fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript.
- ❑ **Julian of Norwich. *Revelations of Divine Love***. Trans. Elizabeth Spearing. Penguin Classics, 1998. ISBN 0140446737. Very direct meditations by a fourteenth-century recluse. She speaks of God our mother.
- ❑ ***The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works***. Trans. Clifton Wolters. Penguin Classics, 1978. ISBN 0140443851. More from the late-fourteenth-century English mystical tradition.
- ❑ **Richard Rolle. *The Fire of Love***. Trans. Clifton Wolters. Penguin Classics, 1972. ISBN 0140442561. A fourteenth-century English hermit tells the story of his life and thought.

* This is not intended to be a comprehensive list. Rather it is a personal collection, arranged by pools of association rather than strict categories.