

University of Exeter – History at Streatham

History: books to read over the summer (start at the top and read downwards, as time permits)

Suggestions:

1) John Arnold, *History: A very short introduction* (2000)

A brief introduction to the academic study of history, reflecting on how we study the past and why. It covers key concepts like causation, interpretation, and periodization, and will help you to see that the study of history at university is quite different to the study of history at school.

2) Alison Light, *Common People: The History of an English Family* (2015)

Part memoir, part social history of the England of the Industrial revolution, part reflection on the process of doing history itself. Light's book is readable, engaging and thought provoking.

3) W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955)

When it was published, Hoskins' beautifully written book was a trailblazer, helping to establish 'landscape history' as an area of historical study. Ranging from the Bronze Age to the present, Hoskins approaches the landscape itself as a record of the past, decoding it and revealing its history. Interesting fact: Hoskins was born in St David's, Exeter, and he also wrote a wonderful history of Devon.

4) Two essays: Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness' <http://kirbyk.net/hod/image.of.africa.html> Binyavanga Wainaina, 'How to write about Africa' <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/> – both freely available online

Studying for your history degree, you will soon become aware of the need to use language and concepts in an informed, and precise way. You will also learn to consider a range of different viewpoints when analysing the past. These two articles explore and advocate representations of non-European history and encourage you to challenge your own viewpoint and expectations.

5) Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983)

This cultural history is an absolute classic, written by one of the most influential historians of her age. It tells a cracking story, but at the same time raises questions about the study and practice of history that we should all be thinking about. Davis was also one of the writers and advisors for the 1982 film that was based on the book (freely available on DVD, if you are interested).

You could also read:

- Good, accessible history blogs written by academic historians, such as:

the many-headed monster <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/> (especially the monster mini-series)

Exeter's Imperial and Global Forum <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/>

Exeter Centre for Medieval Studies <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/medievalstudies/>