



What to read, watch and listen to before starting a postgraduate degree in English Literature

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2/07/2024

PhD English Literature student Georgie provides some helpful suggestions on how to prepare for your English Literature course

Getting ready to start a postgraduate English Literature degree and looking for some insights? Look no further, as I'll be discussing my top three recommendations of materials to check out before you join us at the Edgbaston campus, ranging from research inspiration to practical guidance.



Words to That Effect

[‘Words to That Effect’](#) is a podcast produced and hosted by Conor Reid, with 60 episodes that detail ‘stories of the fiction that shapes popular culture’. Each episode is focused on a particular field or subject matter within this scope, ranging from Robin Hood to ‘the origins of the Gothic’, and features an academic who discusses their specialist topic. The podcast even features a few of our own, including a great episode called ‘Unwrapping the Egyptian Mummy’ with special guest [Dr Ellie Dobson](#). A worthwhile listen if you’re looking to get back into an academic headspace after time away from university, or as an opportunity to broaden your research horizons.

UoB Student Services Vlogs

The University of Birmingham has its very own team of Content Shapers who make videos about their experiences here. These range from vlogs about what they spend in a given week, to safety and productivity tips, and are usually applicable to most students. In particular, I’d like to recommend a video on the channel by Robin, a PhD student from the school of Philosophy, Theology and Religion, where he gives a quick summary of his day-to-day activities on campus and gives you an idea of

what postgraduate study actually entails. The channel is full of great content aimed at students from a broad range of backgrounds, so it's worth a look!



Robin shows what a day in the life of a PhD student is like

Join a reading group

Now this may sound like incredibly vague advice, but one way I stayed in touch with academia before I started my PhD was being involved in reading groups and other postgraduate-student-led collectives. This is particularly helpful if it's within your future area of research – e.g. a medievalist reading group if you're planning on studying Arthurian romances – but even just hearing from current postgraduate students can be extremely helpful.

Not only that, but (big word incoming) these can be great opportunities to network with future colleagues, and find people with whom you might want to collaborate in the years to come. Making these connections early isn't a requirement, by any means, but it can help you feel in touch with the wider postgraduate community and give you an idea of what to expect from your course.

These groups are numerous within English Literature, and within the UoB English department – I myself run one on literary theory within popular culture – and you can check out [the full list of active reading groups](#). While they're designed with current postgraduate students in mind, many include external members, so just email the group in question if you're interested.

