**History: Pre-A Level Recommended Reading**

As you will have seen from the options booklet, we run two different courses for History: early-modern and modern. The advice below is tailored to these two courses.

None of this reading is mandatory but we hope that this acts as a helpful guide for what you can do over the Summer Term and holidays. This work would help to put you in a stronger position for starting the History A Level when you arrive at Stowe.

**General Resources**

As a school we have membership of the [Historical Association](https://www.history.org.uk/) and [History Today’s](https://www.historytoday.com/) online archive. Please email [Paul Griffin](https://www.stowe.co.uk/school/academic/meet-the-teachers/paul-griffin) if you would like the student login details.

**Early Modern**

For the early modern period, we study for two exam papers on English history covering the periods 1399-1509 and then 1509-1603. These papers cover the build up to and events of the Wars of the Roses and then the reigns of all of the Tudor monarchs of the 16th century: Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. There is also a paper covering Luther and the German Reformation, and a piece of coursework on interpretations of Mary I’s reign.

In order to hit the ground running in September, pupils are advised to undertake some background study and preliminary reading on the period leading up to 1399, in order to better understand the events of that year, the structures of English government and monarchy and the issues around the challenges facing the English monarchy in general. A good way of doing this would be to watch the following episodes of David Starkey’s documentary on ‘Monarchy’, which are available on various platforms online:

Episode 3: ‘Conquest’, covering the reigns of William I, William, II, Henry I and Stephen

Episode 4: ‘Dynasty’, covering the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, John and Henry III

Episode 5: ‘A United Kingdom’, covering the reigns of Edward I, Edward II and Edward III

For a light-hearted but informative introduction to the key monarchs, the “[Rex Factor](https://rexfactor.podbean.com/page/18)” podcast episodes for this period would also be helpful as an introductory guide. The Historical Association’s podcast series [‘William I to Henry VII’](https://www.history.org.uk/student/categories/567/module/6307/podcast-series-william-i-to-henry-vii) (contact Paul Griffin for the login details) is similarly engaging and helpful.

Recommended introductory books for the early-modern course:

**John Gillingham and Ralph A. Griffiths, Medieval Britain: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford University Press, 2000).**

This is available on Amazon and chapters 1-8 are especially useful, giving further detail of the reigns of the various medieval English monarchs leading up to 1399. Chapters on key themes such as, ‘Politics, Law and Religion’, ‘The Economy in the Early Middle Ages’ and ‘Wealth, Population and Social Change in the Later Middle Ages’ are also very helpful.

**Diarmaid MacCulloch, Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700 (Penguin, 2004)**

The opening chapters covering the life and work of Martin Luther would be a helpful introduction to the aspects of the course covering the Reformation

**Peter Marshall, The Origins of the Reformation (Historical Association Article,** [**Online**](https://www.history.org.uk/podcasts/categories/437/podcast/37/the-origins-of-the-reformation)**)**

This article provides a concise introduction to the reformation. Please contact Paul Griffin for login details.

**Modern**

In the Lower Sixth, our ‘modernists’ study British History from 1918-97 and American History from 1955-92. In the Upper Sixth, pupils examine the British Empire from 1763-1914, completing a piece of coursework on a related topic.

In order to get ahead for the Lower Sixth course, pupils are advised to develop an overview understanding of British and American 20th century history. A wider knowledge of the major leaders and key cultural, political, economic and social themes would be very beneficial.

Andrew Marr’s excellent series on “The Making of Modern Britain” and a “History of Modern Britain” are widely available online and provide an effective overview to the Britain course. For the USA course, the History Channel series “The Presidents” gives an effective overview of the key periods that the course covers.

For those that enjoy podcasts, the Washington Post’s [“Presidential” podcast](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/podcasts/presidential/) provides concise overviews of the key leaders. There are also several movies that cover (to varying degrees of accuracy) some of the themes considered on the course. Below are a few of our favourites that are available on streaming platforms:

* The Iron Lady (2011)
* Made in Dagneham (2010)
* Selma (2015)
* The Post (2017)
* Suffragette (2015)

Recommended introductory books for the modern course:

**Andrew Marr, A History of Modern Britain (Pan, 2017).**

**Andrew Marr, The Making of Modern Britain: From Queen Victoria to VE Day (Pan, 2010).**

**Donald Critchlow, American Political History: A Very Short Introduction (OUP, 2014).**

**Paul S. Boyer, American History: A Very Short Introduction (OUP, 2012)**