

A BRIEF LIST OF USEFUL REFERENCE BOOKS

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I. Desk Reference Books

A. General

1. A good dictionary (*Webster's Collegiate* and the *American Heritage* are obvious choices).
2. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (provides meanings of words as they have evolved, with examples of uses).
3. *Roget's International Thesaurus*
4. Spelling Dictionary (in addition to SpellCheck!)

B. Literary

1. *Bible*, King James Version with Concordance (essential for looking up religious references; the concordance tells you where any single word appears).
2. *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton or *The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves (What was the sin of Sisyphus? How did Midas get his ears? Who was Philomel? Etc.)
3. *A Handbook to Literature* by C. Hugh Holman, et.al.
4. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* by James Hart (a handy guide for biographical and historical information. Includes brief discussion of many important works. But contains some bad information, such as the entry on "jazz.")
5. *The New Columbia Encyclopedia* by William H. Harris, Judy S. Levy (Like the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, only better; ask your parents for this one-volume treasure trove for Christmas).

II. Style Manuals

A. Rules for Scholarly Writing

1. *MLA Handbook*
2. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian

B. Principles of Composition

1. *The Elements of Style* by W. Strunk and E. B. White
2. *The Random House Handbook*, Frederick Crews

III. Literary Histories

- A. *The Literary History of the United States* by Spiller, Johnson, et al (3 volumes)
- B. *A Literary History of England* by Albert C. Baugh, et al (1 volume)
- C. *The Oxford History of English Literature* (14 volumes)
- D. *A History of the English Language* by Albert C. Baugh
- E. *The American Language* by H. L. Menken
- F. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed, M. H. Abrams, et al (excellent introductions to the various “periods” of literary history, as well as to individual English writers).

IV. Bibliographical Studies

- A. Books to Own
 - 1. *A Guide to English Literature* by F. W. Bateson
 - 2. *A Bibliographical Guide to Studies in the Literature of the USA* by Clarence H. Gohdes
- B. Useful Library Sources
 - 1. *The Humanities Index*
 - 2. *The MLA Bibliography*
 - 3. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*
 - 4. *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*
 - 5. *Literary History of United States* by Spiller, Johnson (Bibliography in 3rd volume)