

The Preliminary Examination in Portuguese

(Prelims)

The information and advice that follows was compiled to help you to prepare yourself for the first year course at Oxford and the Preliminary Examination. **Please read through it carefully NOW**, so as to be able to act on it in good time.

I. LANGUAGE SKILLS: PREPARATION PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

1. Self-Study Books

Prior to the start of term, in the week preceding Fresher's Week, there will be a one-week pre-sessional course in Portuguese language, aimed at Freshers who are either beginners in Portuguese or who have not studied it formally at GCSE level or beyond. We will be writing to you about this separately. If you have not studied Portuguese as yet, it is essential to make good progress in the language before the start of your first year. Both the pre-sessional and the first year course are designed to give students more time to work on the language at the beginning of their Oxford degree, but every single hour spent learning Portuguese before then will be time well spent, and if you arrive unprepared you will put yourself under unnecessary pressure.

There are a number of simple books for self study, and **you should work through one of them, including the CDs which accompany it, before attending the pre-sessional course or coming up in October**. Choices include:

- Ana Tavares, *Português XXI*, vol 1 (Lidel, 2003) with exercise-book
- M. A. Naar, *Colloquial Portuguese* (Routledge)
- Maria Fernanda Allen, Hugo's *Portuguese in Three Months*
- Manuela Cook, *Teach Yourself Portuguese*

The above suggestions focus on the European Portuguese norm. Anyone who has already studied Brazilian Portuguese may prefer one of the following:

- Sue Tyson-Ward, *Teach yourself Brazilian Portuguese*
- Barbara McIntyre, João Sampaio and Esmenia Simões Osborne, *Colloquial Portuguese of Brazil*

2. Online Resources

You will find a number of listening, reading and even speaking exercises on the **Instituto Camões** webpage (<http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/activity/centro-virtual/atividades-didaticas>).

Só Português (<http://www.soportugues.com.br/secoes/jogos>) has an online games page that concentrates on vocabulary and spelling and should be at the right level for beginners.

Apps such as *Duolingo*, *Memrise*, etc. also offer a good way to take your first steps in learning Portuguese.

3. Classes

In addition to individual study, you may be able to take classes in Portuguese, which can be particularly useful after you have broken the ice with self-instruction materials. It is also very useful to have some experience of speaking Portuguese before coming up. Classes may be available at Colleges of Further Education, or as part of local evening classes. If you live near a University where Spanish is taught, it is likely that Portuguese is taught there too. You could write to the appropriate department (usually of Spanish or Hispanic Studies) and ask if there is anyone who may be able to offer you some conversation practice in Portuguese. You could also try online lessons: there are lots of sites that link students with teachers who teach using a webcam.

II. LITERATURE: PREPARATORY READING PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

As you know, the Oxford Modern Languages course is a highly literary one. So, as soon as you arrive here, you will be reading and writing about literary texts. During the first year there will be two introductory courses to literature written in Portuguese (known as Paper III and Paper IV) on which you will be examined at the end of the first year. The aim of these two papers will be to acquire some understanding of what literature is, of the various ways in which literary texts convey meaning in a given social or political context, and of what effect they have on the reader.

At this stage, the best way to prepare for the literary element of the first year is to **read as many of the set texts as possible before coming up. You should therefore give high priority to purchasing them.** You may wish to start off by reading the works in translation, whenever this is available, **but you are encouraged to acquaint yourself with the texts in Portuguese as well**, prior to starting in October.

1. Set Texts

Paper III: ‘An Introduction to Twentieth Century Lusophone Literature’.

These are the books that we are likely to be studying first. We hope that you will form your own opinions about these works, and do not expect you to read criticism on them beforehand. The set texts are:

- **Clarice Lispector, *Laços de família*** (any edition)
(translated as *Family Ties*, by Giovanni Pontiero for University of Texas Press; or included in Lispector’s *Complete Stories*, translated by Katrina Dodson, for Penguin)
- **Lídia Jorge, *O Vale da Paixão*** (Lisbon: Dom Quixote)
(translated as *The Migrant Painter of Birds*, published by Harvill).
- **Alda Lara, *Poemas*** (Porto: Vertente)
(these are difficult to source, so copies will be provided.)

Paper IV: 'An Introduction to Drama'

This paper is an introduction to the historical study of literature. The *Auto*, a uniquely Portuguese dramatic form, was first developed by Gil Vicente in the sixteenth century. Reading his plays gives a fascinating glimpse into the social tensions and religious beliefs in the context of a royal court in the early modern period. More recently, the modern playwrights Melo Neto and Suassuna have adapted the form to suit their own region of Brazil. Finally, in the twenty-first century, Ana Luísa Amaral revisits the literature of the past to enter into feminist negotiations of cultural authority in modern-day Portugal. Paper IV is, therefore, designed to help you to understand how genre changes over time and how writers react to the literature of the past and appropriate it for their own purposes. The set texts, which you will normally study during your second term, are:

- **Gil Vicente, *Auto da barca do inferno* and *Auto da Índia***
We recommend that you use the bilingual edition by A.J. Lappin, *Three Discovery Plays* (Aris & Phillips, 1997).
- **João Cabral de Melo Neto, *Morte e vida severina*** (any edition)
- **Ariano Suassuna, *Auto da compadecida*** (any edition)
- **Ana Luísa Amaral, *Próspero Morreu*** (Lisbon: Caminho) This text is difficult to source but available for purchase as an ebook:
<http://www.leyaonline.com/pt/ebooks/prospero-morreu-ebook/>

2. Background Reference Material

In order to gain an understanding of the set texts, you are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the broader cultural/historical context of the Portuguese-speaking world. Some bibliographical suggestions are included below.

ON PORTUGAL

- David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- H. Livermore, *Portugal: a Traveller's History*.
- José H Saraiva, *Portugal: a Companion History* (Manchester: Carcanet)
- *A Companion to Portuguese Literature*, edited by Stephen Parkinson, Cláudia Pazos-Alonso and T.F. Earle (London: Boydell & Brewer).

ON BRAZIL

- Lilia Moritz Schwarz and Heloisa M. Starling, *Brazil: A Biography* (London: Penguin, 2019)

- Anthony Pereira, *Modern Brazil: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- James N. Green, Victoria Languard, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, eds. *The Brazil Reader. History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
- Stephen Hart and Richard Young eds., *Contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies* (London: Arnold).

ON LUSOPHONE AFRICA

- Malyn Newitt, *Portugal in Africa: The Last Hundred Years* (London: Hurst).
- John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Patrick Chabal with Moema Parente Augel, David Brookshaw, Ana Mafalda Leite and Caroline Shaw, *The Post-Colonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press)

ON READING LITERATURE

- Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory. An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester University Press).

Less theoretical...: two books of essays by established writers

- Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (Cambridge University Press), especially chapter 1: ‘What is “a writer,” and how did I become one’
- Ali Smith, *Artful* (Penguin), essays with a slightly gruesome premise but illuminating reflections on how literature works, with quotations and allusions to a huge range of authors (look out for Clarice Lispector and Fernando Pessoa).

III. RECOMMENDED REFERENCE LANGUAGE BOOKS

All students should acquire a good grammar of Portuguese and appropriate dictionaries, particularly an all-Portuguese dictionary giving definitions rather than English equivalents, which can often be misleading.

1. Grammar

There is as yet no comprehensive grammar of Portuguese written in English. However, **you should own a copy of** Amélia Hutchinson and Janet Lloyd’s *Portuguese: An Essential Grammar* (Routledge; 2nd edition), which, although not comprehensive, is very user-friendly.

For memorising verbal conjugations, there is a trustworthy online platform called Conjuga-me (conjugame.net) you can access for free. Otherwise you could acquire a comprehensive guide to verb forms, such as J.N. Nitti and Michael J. Ferreira’s *501 Portuguese Verbs*, or Sue Tyson-Ward’s, *Portuguese verbs and essentials of grammar: a practical guide to the mastery of Portuguese* (McGraw Hill, 2008; 2nd

edition). For help with the acquisition of vocabulary, there is *Harrap's Portuguese vocabulary*.

2. Dictionaries

You will need constant access to all-Portuguese ('monolingual') defining dictionaries as well as two-language ('bilingual') dictionaries. While these are available in the reference sections of the Faculty and several College libraries, you are strongly advised to purchase the best reference materials you can afford. Although they are heavy to transport (unless in CD Rom version), dictionaries purchased abroad are a very good investment.

An excellent and inexpensive defining 'monolingual' dictionary is the *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa* published by Porto Editora. The very comprehensive *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* is highly recommended, particularly for Brazilian usage.

For two-language dictionaries, the **English-Portuguese** and **Portuguese-English** dictionaries from Porto Editora are recommended. There is also the Oxford Portuguese Dictionary (which you will have access to electronically once you have your university email account).

3. Dictionary Apps

Porto Editora has recently released its dictionaries in the form of apps available for smart phones and tablet devices. These are convenient resources and offer full dictionaries for less than the cost of the printed versions. The Porto Editora monolingual *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa* is a free app that can be downloaded from the Google Play store (for Android) and the Apple App Store (for iPad/iPhone). From the *Dicionário Porto Editora* app it is possible to buy the *Dicionário Inglês-Português/Português-Inglês*, which is available relatively inexpensively on a subscription basis. For Brazilian Portuguese, Michaelis also has an English-Portuguese and a monolingual app each available for around £15 — avoid the *Dicionários Escolares* which are limited in their scope.

IV STUDY SKILLS

We recommend that you consider reading a 'how to study' book such as Stella Cottrell, *The Study Skills Handbook*. (Palgrave Macmillan). You will find that student life at Oxford is extremely busy, with lots on offer, both socially and academically, so developing excellent time management skills is essential!

V WHERE TO PURCHASE BOOKS IN PORTUGUESE

The best place to purchase books in Portuguese, new or second hand, is in Portugal or Brazil (and see below for online options). There are established chains like fnac or Bertrand in Portugal and Livraria Cultura and Saraiva in Brazil. Both countries also have a wide network of second hand bookshops, known as *sebos* in Brazil and *alfarrabistas* in Portugal.

In the UK, Portuguese books can be obtained from Grant & Cutler at Foyles, in London (113-119 Charing Cross Rd, London WC2H 0EB). They also have a mail order service. (<http://www.foyles.co.uk/languages>).

Alternatively, you could try the European Bookshop at 123 Gloucester Road, London, SW7 4TE, or online:

<http://www.portuguesebookshop.co.uk/>

The following Portuguese bookstores also have a reliable online ordering service:

www.fnac.pt

www.bertrand.pt

The Brazilian bookstore Livraria Cultura (www.livrariacultura.com.br) and Livraria Travessa (<http://www.travessa.com.br/>) provide online ordering services. You need to pay by credit card, provide passport ID, and it is advisable to choose the 'frete EXPRESS INTERNACIONAL' delivery service option.

The Librarie Portugaise et Brésilienne in Paris has a good selection of books, which can be purchased online. <http://www.librairie-portugaise.com/>

Likewise, if you are visiting Berlin, ALivraria stocks books from Portugal and Brazil: <http://alivraria.de/> and also does a mail order service.

Amazon and Abebooks occasionally have books in Portuguese on their lists at a variety of prices, but look around and don't feel pressured to buy an expensive copy if it is the only one you can find. Book Butler is a comparison site that might help you avoid paying over the odds for books: <http://www.bookbutler.co.uk/>