

English 383: Education in Literature
Professor Sirabian
Fall 2020

In this course we will read three British novels that focus on representations of education, beginning in the eighteenth century and ending in the twenty-first century. We will explore education in these novels, focusing on central ideas such as the purpose of an education, what is a meaningful curriculum, and what does one do with an education. But more specifically, we will also look at educational philosophies (e.g., the liberal arts and vocational instruction), learning at home or through trips abroad and the schoolroom or university, and various methods of instruction. We will also consider the relationship between the student (e.g., the child or adult) and teacher as well as what makes an effective teacher.

Beginning with Johnson's *Rasselas*, we will investigate the meaning and significance of knowledge, reflected in the quotation, "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." Embarking on a form of the grand tour, Rasselas leaves a life of contentment to pursue a greater knowledge of the world in search of what makes humans happy, only to return without the certainty he expected. In Dickens's *Hard Times*, we'll see a schoolroom education influenced by Mr. Gradgrind's (and teacher Mr. M'Choakumchild) philosophy of "facts, facts, facts," and its effects on characters and teachers. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, we'll witness school life, in all of its dimensions, at Hogwarts. The novel presents the tension between students' desire to learn both theoretical and applied knowledge, even in the face of danger, opposed to the institutional, bureaucratic desire for rules, order, regimen, and safety. In addition, we'll experience the pressure Hogwarts students feel in preparing for their OWLs and figuring out their career choices.

The course will begin with a brief history of education from the eighteenth century to the present to give us context for our reading.

Course Requirements (Tentatively): A midterm exam, a research-based course essay, some quizzes and weekly assignments.

Texts

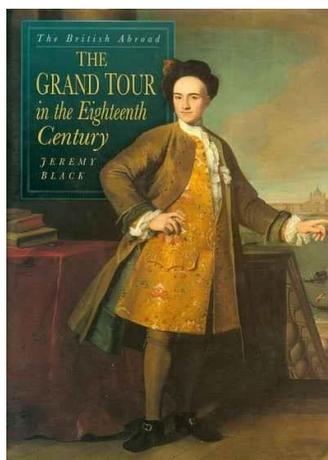
The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia (1759), by Samuel Johnson

Hard Times (1854), by Charles Dickens

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003), by J. K. Rowling



Victorian Schoolroom



Book about the British Grand Tour



Dolores Umbridge, the High Inquisitor, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

