

Brigham Young University, General Education

LETTERS Foundation Document

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Requirement Purpose

An educated person seeks “out of the best books words of wisdom” (D&C 88:118). According to BYU’s *Aims of an Education*, students should develop “a lively appreciation of artistic, literary, and intellectual achievements of human cultures.” The Letters requirement addresses this aim by inviting students to approach texts *not merely* as delivery systems for content but as

- sources of knowledge and aesthetics as texts,
- modes of encountering and evaluating diverse perspectives,
- vehicles for art and action,
- means of historical understanding,
- and sources of spiritual insight.

Learning Outcomes

In the process of completing this requirement, students will

- demonstrate skills in critical reading as they **analyze** primary historical and literary texts as artifacts worthy of study in themselves,
- demonstrate they can **interpret** texts in their contexts, understanding a writer’s cultural background, purpose, audience, and literary strategies (like genre, theme, metaphor, etc.),
- Show they can **evaluate** texts for their power to shape culture (aesthetic or rhetorical traits) and to provide spiritual insight.

Course Characteristics

Courses fulfilling this requirement will introduce students to various means of analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating primary texts. (Reading summaries or other secondary sources is insufficient for this requirement.) These texts should be the principal emphasis of the course and should have literary, philosophical, religious, historical, or cultural significance. Letters courses will use the language of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation in their supporting documents.