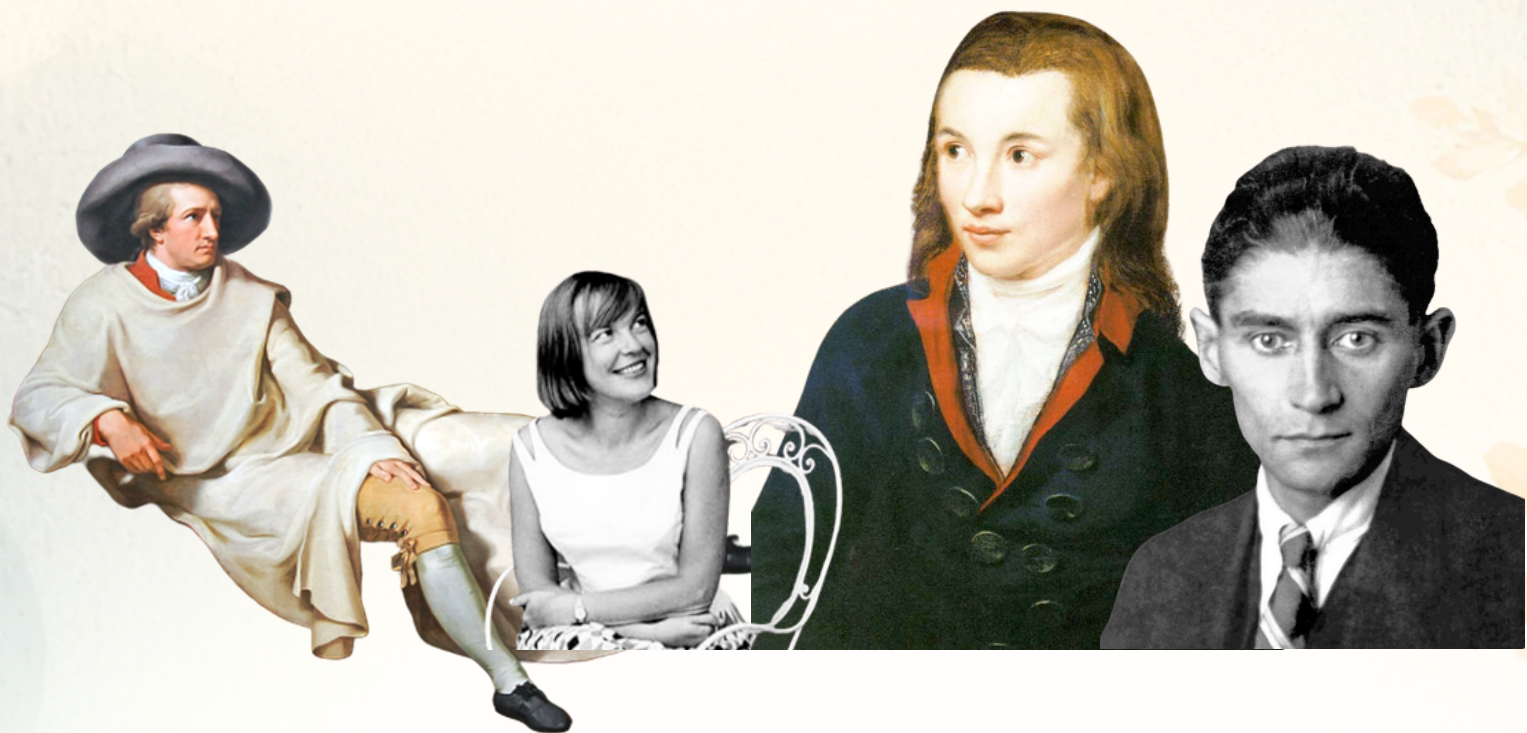


STRANGE LUCIDITY

The Complete German Literature Reading List



Before 1600 / 17th Century / 18th Century / 19th Century / 20th Century / 21st Century

How this list came to be

This list was created to accompany my YouTube video “**German Literature: The Complete Reading List**” on my channel Strange Lucidity. I drew inspiration from dozens of sources — especially major books on German and world literature, university reading lists (where available), and material from my own literature courses. I cross-referenced all of this to compile a list of **238 works** that, in my view, form the backbone of German literature across the centuries. I list my main sources in the description box of the video.

The goal of this list — and of the video — is to give you a map that helps you **navigate German literature and choose your own reading path**. Feel free to print it, annotate it, cross things out — whatever helps you engage with it.

In this PDF, I have underlined the works that I personally consider the most influential, most widely read, and most worth your time if you want to engage seriously with German literature. These are the books that, in my estimation, have had the **most far-reaching influence** both inside and outside the German language.

This list focuses on **primary literature** — mostly fiction. Works of philosophy, sociology, psychology, or literary theory are not included, because otherwise the scope would become unmanageable. Of course, reading thinkers such as Kant, Fichte, Freud, Hegel, Marx, Adorno, and many others is an essential second step for anyone seriously engaging with the German intellectual tradition. I may compile such a list in the future, but it is not part of this one.

Another thing not included is recommendations for specific **translations**. I mentioned titles whenever possible in English – as this list is aimed to help readers who don’t speak German – this does not mean, however, that I endorse that particular edition or translation. That will be part of a later research project.

If you notice a **mistake** or think I’ve overlooked an important author or work, feel free to leave a comment below the video or email me at strange.lucidity0@gmail.com. I’m happy to revise the PDF based on thoughtful suggestions, and I’ll pin a comment under the video to make any changes transparent. All used images are in the public domain.

If you’d like to **support my work**, consider checking out my literature courses on teachable or leaving me a donation on my kofi-account. Both are always linked below my videos.

I hope your reading of German Literature brings you much joy and insight!

All the best,
Maria

Before 1600

- Unknown: Hildebrandslied (9th century)
- Unknown: The Song of the Nibelungs (13th century).
- Walther von der Vogelweide: Minnelieder (c.1200)
- Wolfram von Eschenbach: Parzival (1200–1210)
- Gottfried von Straßburg: Tristan (1210)
- Meister Eckhart: Sermons (c.1300)
- Sebastian Brant: The Ship of Fools (1494)
- Unknown: Fortunatus (1509)
- Martin Luther: The Bondage of the Will (1525)

17th Century

- Martin Opitz: Buch der Deutschen Poeterey (1624)
- Angelus Silesius: The Cherubinic Wanderer (1657)
- Andreas Gryphius: Catharine of Georgia (1657).
- Andreas Gryphius: Poetry (1664)
- Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen:
Simplicissimus (1668)
- Christian Reuter: Schelmuffsky (1696/97)

18th Century

- Johann Christoph Gottsched: Dying Cato (1731)
- Christoph Martin Wieland: The History of Agathon (1766)
- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Minna of Barnhelm (1767)
- Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock: Odes (1771)
- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Emilia Galotti (1772)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Goetz of Berlichingen (1773)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774)
- Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz: Der Hofmeister (1774)
- Heinrich Leopold Wagner: The Child Murderess (1776)
- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Nathan the Wise (1779)
- Friedrich Schiller: The Robbers (1781)
- Friedrich Schiller: Love and Intrigue (1784)
- Friedrich Schiller: Ode to Joy (1786)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Iphigenia in Tauris (1787)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1795–96)

- Ludwig Tieck: Puss in Boots (1797)
- Friedrich Hölderlin: Selected Poems and Fragments (1790s)

19th Century

- Friedrich Schiller: Maria Stuart (1800)
- Novalis: Hymns to the Night (1800)
- Novalis: Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1802)
- Karoline von Günderode: Poems and Fantasies (1804)
- Friedrich Schiller: Poems (1804)
- Achim von Arnim & Clemens Brentano: Des Knaben Wunderhorn (1806)
- Heinrich von Kleist: The Broken Jug (1806)
- Heinrich von Kleist: The Earthquake in Chile (1807)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Faust Part I (1808)
- Heinrich von Kleist: The Marquise of O— (1808)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Elective Affinities (1809)
- Heinrich von Kleist: Michael Kohlhaas (1810)
- Grimm's Fairy Tales (1812)
- E.T.A. Hoffmann: The Sandman (1816)

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: West-Eastern Divan (1819)
- E.T.A. Hoffmann: The Mines of Falun (1819)
- E.T.A. Hoffmann: Princess Brambilla (1820)
- Sophie Tieck: Wonder-Images and Dreams (1823)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Faust Part II (1823)
- Franz Grillparzer: King Ottokar's Fortune and Fall (1825)
- Joseph von Eichendorff: Memoirs of a Good-for-Nothing (1826)
- Heinrich Heine: Book of Songs (1827)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years (1829)
- Eduard Mörike: Painter Nolten (1832)
- Georg Büchner: Danton's Death (1835)
- Georg Büchner: Lenz (1839)
- Johann Nestroy: The Talisman (1840)
- Annette von Droste-Hülshoff: The Jew's Beech (1842)
- Friedrich Hebbel: Maria Magdalena (1844)
- Heinrich Heine: Germany: A Winter's Tale (1844)
- Jeremias Gotthelf: The Black Spider (1847)
- Gustav Freytag: Debit and Credit (1855)
- Gottfried Keller: Romeo and Juliet in the Village (1856)

- Adalbert Stifter: Indian Summer (1857)
- Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: The Amulet (1873)
- Gottfried Keller: Clothes Make the Man (1874)
- Georg Büchner: Woyzeck (1879 ed.)
- Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach: Lotti the Watchmaker (1880)
- Friedrich Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883)
- Theodor Storm: The Rider on the White Horse (1888)
- Gerhart Hauptmann: The Weavers (1892)
- Arthur Schnitzler: Liebelei (1894)
- Gabriele Reuter: From a Good Family (1895)
- Theodor Fontane: Effi Briest (1896)
- Stefan George: The Year of the Soul (1897)

20th Century: 1900-1930

- Thomas Mann: Buddenbrooks (1901)
- Arthur Schnitzler: Lieutenant Gustl (1901)
- Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Elektra (1903)
- Arthur Schnitzler: Reigen (1903)
- Heinrich Mann: Professor Unrat (1905)
- Robert Musil: The Confusions of Young Törless (1906)
- Else Lasker-Schüler: Die Wupper (1908)
- Oskar Kokoschka: Murderer, Hope of Women (1908)
- Robert Walser: Jakob von Gunten (1909)
- Rainer Maria Rilke: The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge (1910)
- Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Jedermann (1911)
- Thomas Mann: Death in Venice (1912)
- Gottfried Benn: Morgue (1912)
- Else Lasker-Schüler: Hebrew Ballads (1913)
- Georg Trakl: Poems (1913)
- Gustav Meyrink: The Golem (1915)
- Franz Kafka: The Metamorphosis (1916)

- Franz Kafka: The Judgment (1916)
- Franz Kafka: In the Penal Colony (1916)
- Gottfried Benn: Brains (1916)
- Robert Walser: The Walk (1917)
- Heinrich Mann: The Loyal Subject (1918)
- Karl Kraus: The Last Days of Mankind (1919)
- Kurt Schwitters: Anna Blume (1919)
- Ernst Jünger: Storm of Steel (1920)
- Ernst Toller: Masses and Man (1920)
- Hugo von Hofmannsthal: The Difficult Man (1921)
- Rainer Maria Rilke: Duino Elegies (1923)
- Thomas Mann: The Magic Mountain (1924)
- Robert Musil: Three Women (1924)
- Arthur Schnitzler: Fräulein Else (1924)
- Franz Kafka: The Trial (1925)
- Franz Kafka: The Castle (1926)
- Arthur Schnitzler: Dream Story (1926)
- Franz Kafka: Amerika (1927)
- Hermann Hesse: Steppenwolf (1927)
- Stefan Zweig: Confusion of Feelings (1927)

- Stefan Zweig: Decisive Moments in History (1927)
- Bertolt Brecht: The Threepenny Opera (1928)
- Alfred Döblin: Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929)
- Erich Maria Remarque: All Quiet on the Western Front (1929)
- Erich Kästner: Fabian (1929)
- Vicki Baum: Grand Hotel (1929)
- Kurt Tucholsky: Germany, Germany Above All (1929)
- Marieluise Fleißer: Pioneers in Ingolstadt (1929)

20th Century: 1930-1950

- Robert Musil: The Man Without Qualities (1930–43)
- Ödön von Horváth: Stories from the Vienna Woods (1931)
- Irmgard Keun: The Artificial Silk Girl (1932)
- Joseph Roth: The Radetzky March (1932)
- Hans Fallada: Little Man, What Now? (1932)
- Joseph Roth: The Bust of the Emperor (1934)

- Elias Canetti: Auto-da-Fé (1935)
- Klaus Mann: Mephisto (1936)
- Irmgard Keun: After Midnight (1937)
- Stefan Zweig: Beware of Pity (1939)
- Gertrud Kolmar: The Woman and the Animals (1939)
- Bertolt Brecht: Svendborg Poems (1939)
- Anna Seghers: The Seventh Cross (1942)
- Stefan Zweig: Chess Story (1942)
- Stefan Zweig: The World of Yesterday (1942)
- Anna Seghers: Transit (1944)
- Nelly Sachs: In the Dwellings of Death (1946)
- Hans Erich Nossack: The End (1946)
- Thomas Mann: Doctor Faustus (1947)
- Wolfgang Borchert: The Man Outside (1947)
- Ise Aichinger: The Greater Hope (1948)
- Arno Schmidt: Leviathan (1949)
- Bertolt Brecht: Mother Courage and Her Children (1949)

20th Century: 1950-1975

- Heimito von Doderer: The Strudlhof Steps (1951)
- Heimito von Doderer: A Murder Everyone Commits (1952)
- Paul Celan: Poppy and Memory (1952)
- Ingeborg Bachmann: The Deferred Time (1953)
- Günter Eich: Messages of the Rain (1955)
- Friedrich Dürrenmatt: The Visit (1956)
- Heimito von Doderer: The Demons (1956)
- Arno Schmidt: The Egghead Republic (1956)
- Max Frisch: Homo Faber (1957)
- Max Frisch: The Fire Raisers (1958)
- Bruno Apitz: Naked Among Wolves (1958)
- Günter Grass: The Tin Drum (1959)
- Uwe Johnson: Speculations about Jakob (1959)
- Hans Magnus Enzensberger: landessprache (1960)
- Max Frisch: Andorra (1961)
- Johannes Bobrowski: Sarmatian Time (1961)
- Brigitte Reimann: Arrival in Everyday Life (1962)
- Marlen Haushofer: The Wall (1963)

- Thomas Bernhard: Amras (1964)
- Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann: The Embrace (1965)
- Ernst Jandl: Loud and Luise (1966)
- Thomas Bernhard: Gargoyles (1967)
- Siegfried Lenz: The German Lesson (1968)
- Rolf Dieter Brinkmann: Nobody Knows More (1968)
- Marie Luise Kaschnitz: Still Stands (1970)
- Heinrich Böll: Group Portrait with Lady (1971)
- Ingeborg Bachmann: Malina (1971)
- Peter Handke: Short Letter, Long Farewell (1972)
- Peter Handke: A Sorrow Beyond Dreams (1972)
- Irmtraud Morgner: The Life and Adventures of Trobadora Beatriz (1974)
- Peter Weiss: The Aesthetics of Resistance (1975–1981)
- Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann: Westwärts 1 & 2 (1975)

20th Century: 1975-2000

- Christa Wolf: Patterns of Childhood (1976)
- Alexander Kluge: The Air Raid on Halberstadt (1977)
- Martin Walser: Runaway Horse (1978)
- Peter Rühmkorf: Holdable Until End of 1999 (1979)

- Einar Schleef: Gertrud (1980)
- Josef Winkler: Still Life (1980)
- Herta Müller: Nadirs (1982)
- Christoph Hein: The Distant Lover (1982)
- Rainald Goetz: Insane (1983)
- Thomas Bernhard: The Loser (1983)
- Libuše Moníková: Pavane for a Dead Princess (1983)
- Elfriede Jelinek: The Pianist (1983)
- Thomas Bernhard: Woodcutters (1984)
- Thomas Bernhard: Old Masters (1985)
- Christa Wolf: Cassandra (1985)
- Thomas Bernhard: Extinction (1986)
- Patrick Süskind: Perfume (1986)
- Barbara Honigmann: A Chapter from My Life (1986)
- Christoph Ransmayr: The Last World (1988)
- Volker Braun: Bottomless Sentence (1988)
- Thomas Bernhard: Heroes' Square (1989)
- Elfriede Jelinek: Lust (1989)
- Christa Wolf: What Remains (1990)
- Durs Grünbein: Skull Base Lesson (1991)

- Urs Widmer: The Blue Siphon (1992)
- Ruth Klüger: Still Alive (1992)
- Uwe Timm: The Invention of Curried Sausage (1993)
- Feridun Zaimoglu: Kanak Sprak (1995)
- Christian Kracht: Faserland (1995)
- Emine Sevgi Özdamar: Mother Tongue (1995)
- Marcel Beyer: The Karnau Tapes (1995)
- Bernhard Schlink: The Reader (1995)
- Elfriede Jelinek: The Children of the Dead (1995)
- Ingo Schulze: Simple Stories (1998)

21st Century

- W. G. Sebald: Austerlitz (2001)
- Thomas Hürlimann: Fräulein Stark (2001)
- Günter Grass: Crabwalk (2002)
- Kathrin Röggla: wir schlafen nicht (2004)
- Daniel Kehlmann: Measuring the World (2005)
- Kathrin Röggla: draußen tobt die dunkelziffer (2005)
- Daniel Glattauer: Love Virtually (2006)
- Ann Cotten: Fremdwörterbuchsonette (2007)
- Clemens Meyer: All the Lights (2008)
- Herta Müller: The Hunger Angel (2009)
- Terézia Mora: The Only Man on the Continent (2009)
- Juli Zeh: Corpus Delicti (2010)
- Wolfgang Herrndorf: Why We Took the Car (2010)
- Yoko Tawada: The Naked Eye (2011)
- Judith Hermann: Summerhouse, Later (2011)
- Felicitas Hoppe: Hoppe (2012)
- Sasha Marianna Salzmann: Mother Tongue Mameloshn (2012)

- Elfriede Jelinek: Charges (The Suppliants) (2013)
- Robert Schindel: The Cold One (2013)
- Stefanie Sargnagel: Binge Living (2013)
- Jenny Erpenbeck: Go, Went, Gone (2015)
- Abbas Khider: A Slap in the Face (2016)
- Robert Menasse: The Capital (2017)
- Michael Lentz: Schattenfroh (2018)
- Saša Stanišić: Where You Come From (2019)
- Evelyn Grill: Der Begabte (2019)
- Monika Helfer: Last House Before the Mountain (2020)