French Literature: A Very Short Introduction
John D. Lyons

French Literature: A Very Short Introduction examines texts that portray protagonists whose adventures and conflicts reveal shifts in literary and social practices. It explores the notion of the ‘problematic hero’ and introduces a number of major works from a wide variety of periods, styles, and genres, examining how each fits into society and reflects its concerns and values. The first great works of this repertory were written in the twelfth century in northern France. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, French literature includes authors writing in many parts of the world, from the Caribbean to Western Africa.

German Literature: A Very Short Introduction
Nicholas Boyle

German writers, from Luther and Goethe to Heine, Brecht, and Günter Grass, have had a profound influence on the modern world. German Literature: A Very Short Introduction traces the course of German literature from the late Middle Ages to the present, focussing especially on the last 250 years. Emphasizing the economic and religious context of many masterpieces of German literature, it highlights how they can be interpreted as responses to social and political changes within an often violent and tragic history. In doing so it illuminates the power of German literature and the German intellectual tradition, and its impact on the wider cultural world.

Goethe: A Very Short Introduction
Ritchie Robertson

Goethe: A Very Short Introduction
Goethe: A Very Short Introduction covers the life and work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832): scientist, administrator, artist, art critic, and supreme literary writer in a vast variety of genres. Looking at Goethe’s poetry, novels, and drama pieces, as well as his travel writing, autobiography, and essays on art and aesthetics, it analyses some of the key themes in his works: love, nature, religion, and tragedy. Dispelling the misconception of Goethe as a sedate Victorian sage, it shows how much of his art was rooted in turbulent personal conflicts, and draws on recent research to present a complete portrait of the scientific work and political activity that accompanied Goethe’s writings.

### Italian Literature: A Very Short Introduction
**Peter Hainsworth and David Robey**

Italian Literature: A Very Short Introduction considers Italian literature from the Middle Ages to the present day. Examining themes such as regional identities, political disunity, and the role of the national language, it covers a wide range of authors and works, including Dante, Petrarch, Manzoni, Montale, and Calvino. It explores some of the distinctive traditions of the literature, such as its liking for theorizing its own position, its concern with politics, and its secular orientation. Concluding by looking at the ways in which Italian literature has changed over the last thirty years, this VSI examines the influence of women's writing in Italian, and acknowledges the belated recognition of its importance.

### Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction
**Catriona Kelly**

Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction explores the place and importance of literature in Russian culture. How and when did a Russian national literature come into being? What shaped its creation? How have the Russians regarded their literary language? This VSI uses the work and treatment of the poet and novelist Pushkin, ‘the Russian Shakespeare’, as a way of illustrating the wider themes and concerns of Russian literature. Why are Russian writers venerated, and how have they been interpreted inside Russia and beyond? The influence of folk tale traditions, orthodox religion, and the West are also considered.

### Spanish Literature: A Very Short Introduction
**Jo Labanyi**

Spanish Literature: A Very Short Introduction
Spanish Literature: A Very Short Introduction explores the ways in which it has been read, in and outside Spain, explaining misconceptions, outlining the insights of recent scholarship, and suggesting new readings. Spanish literature has given the world the figures of Don Quixote and Don Juan, and is responsible for the ‘invention’ of the novel in the 16th century. The medieval period produced literature in Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew, and today there is a flourishing literature in Catalan, Galician, and Basque as well as in Castilian — the language that has become known as ‘Spanish’. A multi-layered history of exile has produced a transnational literary production, while writers in Spain have engaged with European cultural trends.