

# EpicureanFriends Participants Reading List Report

**Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2021 at 1:56 PM**

Recent discussions with [Mathitis Kipouros](#) and others has led me back to the issue of how to deal with a suggested reading list of core texts. Eventually it would be good to have some kind of overall report or badge on the user profile enabling each user to state which of the core texts they have read, because that is probably as much an indicator of the "depth of understanding" that users have as is anything else. As you know, we don't require real names on the forum, so when new users arrive there's no way for existing users to know if they are talking to a rank novice or the equivalent of David Sedley or other recognized authority.

At present we don't have an integrated mechanism to display the depth of reading along with the user gravator or other information (such as Activity Points) that is currently displayed at various places in the site. There doesn't seem to be a way currently to give Activity Points by numbers of references read. Likewise there is always going to be the issue of whether new users have really read the material or are just saying so. On that last point it likely makes sense to try to make use of the "Quiz" system to get at least a broad indication of whether a user is in fact familiar with a particular work.

As a first step in the direction of giving people some kind of a way to estimate their own and others' depth of study, in this post I will set up a "poll" and list some key texts. (My original goal was to list five but as I write it I am up to eight.) It would be optimal to be able to do this in a very granular way, and list each of Epicurus' letters, each of the books of Lucretius' poem, and go in detail as to various articles. Just to get off the ground, however, I'm going to set up the poll with just a few choices.

Also, I know it's going to be a controversial choice as to where to rank DeWitt's book on this list, if at all. Because this is an open forum where (I hope) we have lots of casual readers and young people who have not completed a lot of study of general philosophy, I will make the executive decision that a young person who has read start to finish in Lucretius or even Diogenes Laertius Book Ten may well not have a clue as to what they've just read. I think it's essential to have a grounding in the overall subject matter and Epicurus' place in the history of Western and Greek philosophy to even begin to understand the issues involved, so I am going to rank DeWitt's book as number one on this list. Obviously that creates a dilemma if, for example, someone like David Sedley or Voula Tsouna wants to join and he or she has not read DeWitt's book. In addition, I believe I am correct in saying that some of our best core people here may not have read some or any of DeWitt's book.

We'll iron those kinks out over time, especially since "compliance" with this reading list is not mandatory at all and isn't linked to any benefits of the forum or otherwise. Speaking as the

Administrator I have always targeted this forum toward "non-specialists" and people who may not know much about Epicurus at all, so in my view such people need to be strongly urged to read an overview before they get bogged down in details, especially in the detailed controversies. For example, I think most of us here would agree that it's a bad idea to introduce a new student to the disputes about "anticipations" and ask them to wade through that material, and come to conclusions about it, before reading the rest of the philosophy.

The results are restricted to those who have voted only, so if you're curious about the results you'll have to answer it first yourself! 😊 (That's of course a motivation to get as many people as possible to answer.) So as a test that we will refine over time to make this ever more useful, here is an initial "poll" as to what books you have read.

The referenced works can be found at the following links:

1. ["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt
2. [The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius Book Ten.](#) (Includes letters to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).)
3. Lucretius' ["On The Nature of Things"](#)
4. ["Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)
5. [Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section](#)
6. [Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section](#)
7. [The Vatican List of Epicurean Sayings](#)
8. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [Martin Ferguson Smith translation](#)

---

### Post by "Don" of August 26, 2021 at 6:17 AM

Well, you know I'm not going to take the test until I've thoroughly read all those, right? 😊 This is a good incentive!

---

### Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 8:08 AM

Well yes that is a good incentive, but also it's probably desirable to have people be straightforward in admitting what they have and have not read 😊 There's certainly a point in life when most of us had never read any of these and that's nothing to be embarrassed about.



And when I set up the poll I specifically made sure to check the post that allows people to change their answers, so the expectation is that the answers do in fact change over time!

Plus it's probably not nearly as embarrassing to admit that someone hasn't read some of these as it is for me to have gone through almost the complete Lucretius podcast never having read Sedley's "Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom!"