

# **Bluff your way in Literature**

by

**Tommy Mackay**

**- a quick guide to knowing your authors for busy students**

**BECKETT, Sam**

**FOR:** Hilarious minimalism. The original alternative comic.

**AGAINST:** Miserable bastard.

**TYPICAL:** Is he here yet?  
Who?  
I don't know.

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**BYRON, Screaming Lord**

**FOR:** Heroically romantic despite deformed digits.

**AGAINST:** Big head

**TYPICAL:** So we'll go no more a prancing  
For my foot restricts my dancing

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**CAMUS, AI**

**FOR:** Amorally mapping out the human condition of indifference.

**AGAINST:** Trying to be moral about it.

**TYPICAL:** My dog died today. Big deal.

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**CHAUCER, Jeff**

**FOR:** Elevating Toilet humour into an art.

**AGAINST:** See CAMUS, AI.

**TYPICAL:** Upon this gentil cok  
Whiche somdel drote  
Streyneth hir maid  
For fere it sote.

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**DICKENS, Chuck**

**FOR:** Making coincidence palatable. Master of funny names.

**AGAINST:** Sentimentalising squalor. The kind of thing American tourists drool over.

**TYPICAL:** 'What bellyaching tosh!' exclaimed Mr Squirtfart.

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**DONNE, Johnny**

**FOR:** Intricate, intellectual imagery (mnemonic to remember – aye, aye, aye)

**AGAINST:** Women seen as a geography lesson.

**TYPICAL:** Come let me press my Cape  
Horn do  
By your Magellan strait.

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**DOSTOEVSKY, Fifi**

**FOR:** Giving realism a good name.

**AGAINST:** No funny names. Leans somewhat towards pessimism. Not the ideal dinner party guest.

**TYPICAL:** Scrobotski's nails scraped feverishly under the rock until they hit upon the rotten tooth of his landlady.

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**ELIOT, Tommy**

**FOR:** Put big poems back on the map.

**AGAINST:** Show off.

**TYPICAL:** By Thames' side leaking  
canopy  
The Sun Ra's legacy entreats  
Through burnished trails of  
ether  
Watcher, missis!

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**HARDY, Tom**

**FOR:** Poetic description without being too mushy. Subtly erotic.

**AGAINST:** Bit too heavy on the fatalism.

See DOSTOEVSKY, Fifi.

**TYPICAL:** And as the heliotropic air caressed the tips of the fresh-mown hay, a glistening dew clung tenderly to each blade of grass in the adjoining rainbows in each drop.

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**JAMES, Hen**

**FOR:** Impeccable structure. Furniture never wobbles.

**AGAINST:** Too impeccable. It's only a novel for God's sake, Hen. Get a life.

**TYPICAL:** He failed within the bounds of his successful ambiguity, having circumnavigated every possible eventuality that may have befallen her embittered recalcitrance.

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**JONSON, Benny**

**FOR:** Brickie

**AGAINST:** Chapped thumbs.

**TYPICAL:**

**My little pone:** I fancy Sir Tory-would be is returning to his basics.

**Tesco:** I have a cunning plan.

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**JOYCE, Jimmy**

**FOR:** All human life is there.

**AGAINST:** Too clever for his own good.

**TYPICAL:** Oh but that monster of a purple vein yes and how he shook when I touched him fool of a man to think I didn't know.

**KAFKA, Frank**

**FOR:** Warped sense of humour and ability to unsettle.

**AGAINST:** Too claustrophobic at times. Verges on boring.

**TYPICAL:** Ever further along, the darkening walls of the corridor tapered inward until K lost sight of the administrator's brittle hair.

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**LAWRENCE, Bert**

**FOR:** The spiritual and elemental essence of sex (but man always comes out on top).

**AGAINST:** No sense of humour.

**TYPICAL:** A moaning convulsion swept through her yielding white body, emerging as an anguished sigh of ruptured life.

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**MILTON, John Boy**

**FOR:** Grand eloquence mixed with bitchiness.

**AGAINST:** Milking a good idea.

**TYPICAL:** Flames leapt to lick bold  
Satan's heels,  
Like a tutu-less vicar – meals  
with squeals.

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**SARTRE, J.P.**

**FOR:** Boldly foisting existentialism on us poor misguided masses.

**AGAINST:** See FOR.

**TYPICAL:** If I was merely a scrap of waste paper lying at his feet, why did he take such drastic measures to walk around it?

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**SCOTT, Wally**

**FOR:** Incurable romantic (in the best possible sense).

**AGAINST:** Can make a sentence last two pages. One could be excused for losing the will to live half way through one such convoluted grammatical maze.

**TYPICAL:** As, harried by the immediacy of their predicament, and the unruliness of their surroundings, they fought on through the relentless rush of the searing rain...

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**SHAKESPEARE, Bill**

**FOR:** Lifting language off its arse.

**AGAINST:** Hard to enjoy on an empty stomach.

**TYPICAL:** But soft what merry bodkin  
hails such news  
As can be quaffed without an  
ample heart.

**WOOLF, Ginny**

**FOR:** Thinking aloud haphazardly.

**AGAINST:** Twee middle class sensibilities.

**TYPICAL:** So sad for such a young girl. And that poor man – what a time to die. My party's ruined.

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**WORDSWORTH, Willie**

**FOR:** Natural enthusiasm.

**AGAINST:** Didn't know when to stop.

**TYPICAL:** On windswept crags by fawning  
trees  
The dandelion cradled bees.

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**ZOLA, Emmy**

**FOR:** Gritty kitchen sink, aeons before it was fashionable.

**AGAINST:** Hardly subtle with the old social message.

**TYPICAL:** She ripped the balls from between his legs. Now there would be meat for dinner.

