

Welcome to Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*
A couple of details before we meet:

The Text: I suggest buying the Oxford World's Classics of the book because the explanatory notes are very good and thorough. You can get this edition from Amazon (\$10.90 from Prime and the Kindle edition is \$1.99)

Reading assignments—Since we only meet twice, and this is a discussion class, I'm asking that you read the first fifty or so pages **BEFORE** our first meeting. Thus:

February 5: chapters 1-22

February 12: chapters 23-end

This is a class with the emphasis on discussion. I'm sure you will have a lot you want to talk about; each chapter is crammed with situations that are part of the lives we have led—we have the advantage of age. The interesting thing is that Johnson wrote *Rasselas* some two hundred and fifty years ago, and yet, as he said, "Human beings are everywhere the same." Are they? Have we found coping skills or ways of thinking that are different from the human condition described in *Rasselas*?

Don't be put off by Johnson's style. I will talk about that and will fill you in on life in eighteenth-century England. We will also talk about the characters—while they are not multi-dimensional, they are not static either.

See you soon!
Beth