

How to Find Information for School Assignments

TOPIC: Literary Criticism

What is literary criticism? Literary criticism analyzes and explains the underlying themes and meanings of books, poems, plays, and essays. Literary criticism is not a plot summary. Instead, it expresses a point of view or opinion about the characteristics and qualities of literature.

FIND BOOKS

SEARCH THE LIBRARY CATALOG

Go to www.lapl.org > Browse the Catalog > type your search
Search for books on the subject of your report

HINTS:

1. Do a KEYWORD search using the name of the author AND the word "criticism."

Example: Toni Morrison criticism

BROWSE CALL NUMBERS

Literary criticism is shelved under Dewey Decimal call numbers in the 800s. Listed below are call numbers where you will find literary criticism on several commonly assigned topics.

808: Writing tips, style guides	822.3: Shakespeare
811: American poetry	823: English fiction
812: American drama	860s: Spanish literature
813: American fiction	880s: Greek plays and mythology
821: English poetry	896: African literature
822: English drama	897: Native American literature

Example: Literary criticism on the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda would be found in the 860s because he wrote primarily in Spanish.

FIND COLLECTIONS OF CRITICAL ESSAYS

Many publishers produce literary criticism series that contain biographical information, as well as several critical essays on a particular author or work of literature. These books can provide great 'one-stop shopping' for your research. Try searching for some of these series titles in the LAPL catalog:

<i>Bloom's BioCritiques</i>	<i>Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Works</i>
<i>Columbia Critical Guides</i>	<i>Modern Critical Interpretations</i>
<i>Greenhaven Press Literary Companion</i>	<i>Modern Critical Views</i>
<i>Understanding Great Literature</i>	

USE DATABASES to find information from books, magazines, newspapers and websites

Go to www.lapl.org > Click Access the Databases > Student Sources is a great place to start

MAGAZINE & NEWSPAPER DATABASES

Research Library (ProQuest)

Infotrac OneFile

Find full-text articles and book reviews in journals.

Hint: Do a keyword search for the title of your book and/or the author's name, and the words "literary criticism."

Example 1: Basic Keyword Search

To find literary criticism for *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, type:
“farewell to arms literary criticism” (do not include quotation marks)

Example 2: Advanced Search

A basic keyword search is not always the best way to find articles on your subject. For example, if you tried to find literary criticism for *The Stranger* by Albert Camus by searching for “literary criticism stranger,” you would get many search results that had nothing to do with your research topic! For a more precise list of search results, try entering pieces of information about your subject into more than one search field. Type:

Search Box #1: stranger

Search Box #2: camus

Search Box #3: literary criticism

SUBJECT DATABASES**Literature Resource Center (grades 9-12)**

Find biographies, literary criticism from scholarly journals, bibliographies, and links to reliable websites by doing a basic author or title search.

Discovering Collection (grades 6-8)

Search for literary criticism, biographies, plot summaries, interviews, and even study questions. You can search by the title of the book or the author’s name.

WEBSITES AND SEARCH ENGINES**Topic Websites:****CliffsNotes** (<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/>)

Includes author biographies, plot summaries and commentaries, character analyses, and critical essays, as well as tips and guidelines for writing essays.

Internet Public Library Literary Criticism Collection (<http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/>)

Browse for critical essays by title, author’s name, time period, or country of origin. Includes links to critical and biographical websites, as well as other critical essays published online.

SparkNotes Literature Study Guides (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/index.html>)

Like CliffsNotes, these guides provide author biographies, plot overviews, character analyses, explanations of significant quotations, and a short bibliography of further reading on the subject. The guides also provide a description and analysis of major themes, motifs, and symbols in each book.

Search Engines: ***Don’t forget to EVALUATE the reliability and accuracy of websites!
Ask a librarian for a list of questions to ask yourself about a site.***

Yahoo! Search Directory: Literature (<http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/>)

HINT: When you enter your search term, select check the “Search this directory” box so that your results only come from the Literature directory.

Librarians’ Internet Index (<http://www.lii.org/>)

A specialized search engine that offers access to sites previously viewed and approved by librarians.

Google (<http://www.google.com>)

HINT: Use the Advanced Search option.