



## Literary Criticism

### What is literary criticism? How do I find it?

Literary criticism is the evaluation, analysis, description, or interpretation of literary works. It is usually in the form of a critical essay, but in-depth book reviews can sometimes be considered literary criticism. Criticism may examine a particular literary work, or may look at an author's writings as a whole. Finding literary criticism can be challenging. This pathfinder is designed to help students in researching and writing a paper that requires sources of literary criticism.

### On the Internet vs. At the Library

There are many good sources of literary criticism that are now available on the Web. However, there are lots of things that are not yet available electronically, or that require a subscription. Therefore, you will probably need to do some research at a library in your area in order to write a paper that requires literary criticism.

Different libraries have different sources. Your school or public library will have some good resources for literary criticism, but if you need more, you may be able to do some research at an academic library near you. This pathfinder suggests some online and print sources, to show you what kinds of things are available on the Web and in libraries. If you can't find a particular title at your library, don't worry; just ask a librarian your question, and he or she can help you locate a similar resource.

[Terms & Concepts](#) | [Author Information](#) | [Criticism & Summaries](#) | [Finding Books](#) | [Finding Articles](#) | [Writing the Paper](#)

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## Terms & Concepts

Need a definition of allusion, Romanticism, satire, or other literary concept?

### [A Glossary of Literary Terms](#) and [A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices](#)

<http://www.virtualsalt.com/litterms.htm>

<http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm>

Listings of terms with definitions and useful examples, written by an English professor.

There are lots of books which define literary terms and allusions. These books are in the EHS Media Center.

Harmon, William and Holman, C. Hugh, *A Handbook to Literature*

Quinn, Edward. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*

Urdang, Lawrence. *Allusions: Cultural, Literary, Biblical, and Historical*

Delhanty, Andrew. *The Oxford Dictionary of Allusions*

## Author Information

Want to read more about the author of the book you are researching, or the historical context in which it was written?

### [Literary Criticism Collection](http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/)

<http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/>

Many author biographies are listed in this IPL (Internet Public Library) collection. You can browse by your author's last name.

### [Yahoo's Literary Authors Listing](http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Authors/Literary_Fiction/)

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Authors/Literary\\_Fiction/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Authors/Literary_Fiction/)

A large listing of sites about particular authors.

### [EBSCO Databases](#)

This database provides several specialized databases that includes biographical and limited critical information on authors and works. You can access this resource from this link and you have remote access. Refer to your database reference sheet or check in the Media Center. You can access this resource from this link and you have remote access. Refer to your database reference sheet or check in the Media Center for access information.

### [Discovering Collection](#) (Part of the Gale Databases)

This includes biographical and limited critical information on authors commonly studied in schools and colleges. Also lists further readings about the authors and works. This is in electronic format only. You can access this resource from this link and you have remote access. Refer to your database reference sheet or check in the Media Center for access information.

### [Bloom's Literary Reference Online](#)

This database is specialized to give you biographical and literary criticism information for American, World, and European authors, playwrights, poets, etc. and their works. You can access this resource from this link and you have remote access. Refer to your database reference sheet or check in the Media Center for access information.

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## Criticism & Summaries – Books, Periodical Articles, and Specialized Databases

Looking for some representative criticism on an author or book? Want a plot summary and character list for *Crime and Punishment*?

### [Literary Criticism Collection](http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/)

<http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/>

This IPL collection provides links to online sources of biography, bibliography, and criticism about major authors and works written worldwide. The most comprehensive coverage is in American and British authors. As mentioned in the Author Information section above, this collection has developed some technical problems. However, it still holds valuable information. If the author or work you are interested in is not available, try the [Online Literary Criticism Guide](http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/guide.html), <http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/guide.html>, for other good places to start looking on the Web.

[Discovering Collection](#) (Part of the Gale Databases)

This includes biographical and limited critical information on authors commonly studied in schools and colleges. Also lists further readings about the authors and works. This is in electronic format only. You can access this resource from this link and you have remote access. Refer to your database reference sheet or check in the Media Center for access information.

[Bloom's Literary Reference Online](#)

This database is specialized to give you biographical and literary criticism information for American, World, and European authors, playwrights, poets, etc. and their works. You can access this resource from this link and you have remote access. Refer to your database reference sheet or check in the Media Center for access information.

There are lots of series which include plot synopses and basic criticism of famous novels. Frank Magill's **Masterplots** are reasonably reliable and most articles are written by scholars. Other sources, like **Cliff's Notes**, are sometimes also written by scholars, but be sure and check to see that the author has good credentials (for example, a master's degree or PhD in literature).

Magill, Frank N., **Masterplots**: Plot synopses and brief critical evaluations of major works of international literature. Sets that are part of the EHS Reference Collection:

- American Fiction Series ; Revised Series
- British Fiction Series
- Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction Series
- World Fiction Series

This series has short biographical and in-depth critical essays on major authors and their works. Each essay also includes a brief annotated bibliography of further readings.

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## Finding Books

Looking for a book about your author, or a volume of critical essays about a literary work?

Books in the EHS Media Center that deal with biography have call numbers of 92 or 920. Critical analysis resources can be found with call numbers 810 – 899. The call number will depend upon the author's nationality and genre of literature. You will also find books with the same call numbers in the Reference section of the Media Center.

When searching for books in your library's online catalog, you can do a keyword search, but the best way to find good sources of information is to do a subject search. Subject searches look for the **Library of Congress Subject Headings** assigned to a particular book. These headings help you find books which are specifically about your topic.

In many online catalogs, you can simply do a subject search for your author's name, and then browse a list of headings which begin with that name. Good subject headings for literary criticism often include the words "**criticism and interpretation**." Another way to find a good subject heading is to look in the red LCSH books, which your librarian can help you find and use. Look for your author's last name, and then browse for useful headings.

Some examples of useful subject headings for literary criticism might be:

- Chaucer, Geoffrey, d. 1400—Criticism and interpretation.
  - Walker, Alice, 1944—Color Purple.
  - American fiction—Indian authors—History and criticism.
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## Finding Articles

To find articles on your topic in a periodical index, do a **keyword search** as you would in a library's online catalog. Before you start searching, you may want to look at [Skills for Online Searching](http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus/skills.htm), <http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus/skills.htm>, which has advice on how to search electronic databases and the World Wide Web, and links to useful tutorials.

Periodicals can also be found in all the databases that we own. This is a direct link to information/research databases for Eldon High School.

[Database Online Links](#) – Destiny Homepage

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## Writing the Paper

Need some help formulating your paper or citing sources?

### [A+ Research and Writing Guide](#)

<http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus/>

This IPL guide walks you through the process of writing a research paper, from choosing a topic to doing research to writing your bibliography.

### [Guide to Conducting Literary Research](#)

[http://www.gale.com/free\\_resources/term\\_paper/index.htm](http://www.gale.com/free_resources/term_paper/index.htm)

"This guide is designed to support you as you use electronic and print resources to: choose a topic, craft a thesis, evaluate thesis and sources, identify a variety of information sources, take efficient notes, begin and organize a research paper, use parenthetical documentation, prepare a Works Cited page, draft and revise a research paper."

### [Writers Workshop: Writer Resources](#)

<http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/>

Excellent handbooks on grammatical rules, writing techniques, and citing sources.

### [Documentation Styles](#)

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html>

A guide to citing print and electronic sources in APA, MLA, Chicago, and some other styles.

### [Online! Citation Styles](#)

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html>

Learn to cite various electronic sources in APA, MLA, Chicago, and CBE styles.

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*This pathfinder was adapted from iPL2 Pathfinders online. <http://www.ipl.org/>*