



# Finding Criticisms

## How Do I... Undergraduate Research Guides

Part of the "Finding Specific Kinds of Information Series"

### In this guide you will learn how to:

- Explain what a criticism is
- Pick out criteria when looking for a criticism
- Locate criticisms in a variety of sources

### Need More Help? Ask a Librarian!

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## What is a criticism?

A *criticism* is an evaluation of literature which provides an analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the work. The literature may be novel, essay, play, poetry, or short story. The purpose of a criticism is to provide an analysis and assessment of the work itself, this is often done with comparisons to other works by the author or similar works by other authors. A criticism differs from a review. A review is focused on the evaluation of the work and usually appears following the publication of a book or a performance of a play. Reviews are generally considerably shorter and tend not to be published in scholarly sources.

## What should I look for in a criticism?

- The author of the criticism and their credentials.
- The publication in which the criticism is written.
- Evidence to support conclusions reached in the criticism.

## Where can I find criticisms?

There are a number of resources that contain or lead to criticisms. Follow the instructions for each category on the other side of this handout.

# Sources for Locating Criticisms:

## Books

Use the Online Library Catalog (<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/catalog/>) to find books about a single author or literary work.

To locate books that are devoted to criticism of an author or literary work, search for the author as a subject:

- Use the Quick Search option, enter the last name first (e.g., morrison toni) and select Subject Headings from the options in the Search by box. Scroll down the results list to locate the subheading criticism and interpretation. Examine the list for subheadings that include the title of an individual work (e.g., morrison toni beloved).

To locate book chapters or essays in anthologies with criticisms of particular works:

- Use the Advanced Search enter the literary work's title (e.g., "one hundred years of solitude"), in the Search by box select Note words.
- For works not originally published in English, use the untranslated title as well (e.g., "cien años de soledad"). In some cases, using a shortened version of a literary work's title may result in a few additional sources (e.g., "huck finn").

## Databases

Located via the Undergraduate Library Find Articles Guide: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/find/articleguide.html>

MLA Bibliography: Includes citations to book chapters, books, and other types of materials from more than 4,400 journals and series, and 1,000 book publishers. To search:

- Enter title of work and/or author in search box(es).
- Enter criticism in additional search box. If the results number is large, you may wish to select GC Genre/Classification from the drop-down menu and repeat your search to further limit your results.

JSTOR: Provides access to older articles in many disciplines. To search:

- Enter title, author, and criticism in search box. It is not necessary to enter the word AND between your words.

Project MUSE: Allows simultaneous searching of journals from Johns Hopkins University Press. To search:

- Click Search on the top of the page and enter search terms. It is not necessary to enter the word AND between your words.

*(\*\*Note: To locate additional criticisms select databases specific to the topic discipline and enter title/author information along with criticism in your search statement.\*\*)*

## Reference Sources

Literature Resource Center: The Literature Resource Center is an online reference collection from the Gale Group. In addition to critical essay it includes biographies, bibliographies, work overviews, author-related web sites, and an events timeline. To search:

- Access from this page: [www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/find/ereference.html](http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/find/ereference.html) (Under Literature)
- Enter the title of the work and/or the author name in the search boxes
- Choose the Literary Criticism tab to access excerpts drawn from the Gale's print titles.

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