



Finding Literary Criticism

When you're looking for literary criticism on a novel, poem, play, or short story, it is important to remember that there is no guarantee that your chosen work of literature has had criticism written about it.

If you do not succeed in finding anything on your work, please go by or call the Reference Desk at the library and the librarians will help you.

Reference Books

The titles listed below are all located near the Reference/Government Publications Desk at JD Williams Library. Many of these titles are multi-volume series. You find out which volumes your author is in by looking up their name in the series index or by looking up the work in the table of contents. Some of the criticism in these books is excerpted from longer critical essays or articles, although shorter articles are given in full. There is usually a picture of the author or work and some biographical information included. In the front section of the first 6 titles, you can find an example of how you put criticism you find in that book into your bibliography.

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM

PN 771 .C59

Also available with less information online. Search by author's name rather than the work for the best results. Covers authors now living or who died after December 31, 1959.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

PN 771 .G27

Covers authors who died between 1900 and 1959.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

PN 761 .N5

Very broad--covers authors who died between 1800 and 1899.

LITERATURE CRITICISM: 1400 to 1800

PN 86 .L56

Great resource for classic works of literature. More in-depth than the entries in the other books above, with criticism from the authors' times to the present.

BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM

PS 153 .N5 B556

Criticism from the 18th century to the present, with authors from the United States, Nigeria, South Africa, Jamaica, and more.

SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

PR 2965 .S43

Covers everything Shakespeare, both his poems and his plays.

SHORT STORY CRITICISM

PN 3373 .S56

If you need short story criticism, it is worth checking to see if your story or author is included in these volumes. Although many of the authors in here are in some of the other series above, the entries in this collection are more detailed and cover just the short stories of different authors.

MASTERPLOTS II - Poetry Series

PN 1110.5 .M37 Criticism on poetry from around the world and from the 7th century to the present. The last 3 volumes are a supplement to the first 6, and they focus on the poetry of traditionally under-represented people writing in English. The short reviews are divided into 3 main parts: an overview of the poem, forms and devices, and themes and meanings.

Books and Book Chapters

You may not have time to read a whole book, but often a chapter or chapters inside a book will give you enough information on your chosen work. You find books in the library's online catalog. Try some LC Subjects searches in the following format:

[author's last name, author's first name] criticism and interpretation

Example:

morrison, toni criticism and interpretation

It helps to understand your chosen work better if you understand the place and time period in which it was written. Many books are written about **literary movements** or **types of literary works** (also called genre). Try some [LC Subjects](#) searches in the following format:

[nationality] [genre] [time period] history and criticism

Example:

american fiction 20th century history and criticism If your author and chosen work are well-known enough, there may be books written on just that particular work. You can find out if there are any in the library by once again doing an [LC](#)

[Subjects](#) search in the following format (**HINT:** You find the author's birth and death dates by doing an [Author](#) search on their name):

**[author's last name, author's first name] [author's birth and death dates]
[title of work]**

Example:

faulkner, william 1897 1962 the sound and the fury

Articles

Literary criticism articles are almost always more narrowly focused than books. They are found in scholarly or peer reviewed journals, which are written by experts and may use more complex language than you might find in books. Instead of discussing an author's works in a broad, wide-ranging way, an article will likely be about one specific aspect of one specific work--sometimes even on one stanza of a poem.

You find articles in databases . If the article you want is not full text, you must do a [Journal Title](#) search in the library's catalog to see whether we subscribe to the **journal** -- don't search on the article title, search on the **journal** title. **HINT:** Sometimes the journal title is called the "Source" in these databases.

[EBSCOhost](#) : *Academic Search Elite* Contains many full-text articles. Always check the "Peer Reviewed" box on the search page when you're looking for literary criticism. **NOTE:** Don't forget to look at the links listed under "Subject(s)" after you click the title of an article that interests you - you can find more good articles by clicking on these links. Some search strategies could include the following:

chopin AND awakening
eliot AND "waste land"
modernism AND frost

[JSTOR](#) All full-text articles; some journals go back to the 19th century. Most articles in JSTOR are about 4-5 years old. Check the box by "Language and Literature" journals when you search. For best results, search on either the title of your work or the author's full name in this format: first