

How to Find Literary Criticism

Literary criticism

Literary criticism (or 'explication') can be defined as the art of evaluating or analyzing with knowledge and propriety works of literature. It is criticism or analysis, which elucidates a literary text and thereby makes its meaning more clear or, discovers meanings that have not been perceived before. It is interpretation or explanation of the meaning of a work of literature, including observations on theme, symbol, and structure. Criticism is a term that has been applied to the description, justification, analysis, or judgment of works of literature.

Literary criticism can be found in a number of different sources. This guide will help you identify the sources and learn how to find specific articles and books on authors and specific literary works.

Look for Books: iLink (our library catalog)

To locate books containing criticism of an author's works, go to the [Library home page](#) and click on [Our Catalog](#). Do a *subject search* on the author's last name and you will find both biographical and critical books on the author.

Look for Articles: Use a periodical index or annual bibliography.

To find current criticism, you may want to use journal articles. Periodical indexes or annual bibliographies identify journals which contain articles on particular topics. If you use a print index, start by looking under the author's last name in a recent issue of the index.

To locate articles in periodicals using online databases, click on [Online Databases](#). Then select English from the drop-down menu of *Databases by Subject*. You will see several databases listed.

- [Infotrac : Expanded Academic ASAP](#)
- [Literature Resource Center](#)
- [Biography Resource Center](#)
- [MLA International Bibliography](#)
- [Wilson Web](#)
- [EBSCO Academic Search Elite](#)
- [JSTOR](#)



Use a bibliography on your author

A bibliography is a book which lists sources of information on a topic. A bibliography on an author will often list books and articles which discuss his/her work. To find these bibliographies, click on *Power Search* and do a *Browse search* by subject, looking under the author's name and dates, with the subheading BIBLIOGRAPHY, for example:

FITZGERALD, F. (SCOTT FRANCIS SCOTT) 1896-1940 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Use other bibliographies or collections of critical excerpts

In addition to specialized bibliographies on particular authors, there are bibliographies which cover specific literary genres, e.g. novels, poems, plays, etc.; and bibliographies which focus on the authors of a particular time-period or nationality. Start by looking under the name of the author. In some cases, listings may be further divided by the title of the individual work.

Collection of Excerpts

A collection of excerpts presents significant passages from criticism written in books and articles. The source of the excerpt is given so that you know where the excerpt originally appeared. The following sources can be found in the Reference Collection at the Library. They are arranged by categories: general, novels, drama, poetry, and short stories. *If you have any questions about using these sources please ask for assistance at the Reference Desk.*

- **GENERAL**

- Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism (NCLC)108 Volumes Ref. 809.034 N57
 - Twentieth Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)116 Volumes Ref.801 G2T
 - Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)153 Volumes Ref. 801 CG2R

Check the most recent volume of the above three titles for the index of previous volumes. These volumes give you excerpts from critical writings on the authors.

Note: Selected materials from these sources are available online from [Literature Resource Center](#).

- **DRAMA**

- American Drama Criticism: Interpretations, 1809-1977 Ref. 016.792 E33A2
 - Drama Criticism 16 Volumes Ref. 809.2 D82T*
 - European Drama Criticism Ref. 016.823 A33C

- **NOVELS**

- The Contemporary Novel: a Checklist of Critical Literature on the British and American Novel since 1945 Ref.016.823 A33C
 - English Novel Explication: Criticism to 1972 Ref. 016.823 P26E

- **POETRY**

Poetry Criticism 38 Volumes Ref. 809.103 P73Y*

Guide to British Poetry Explication Ref. 016.821 M28G

Poetry explication: a Checklist of Interpretation since 1925 of British and American Poems Past and Present Ref. 016.821 K98P3

- **SHORT STORIES**

Short Story Criticism 49 Volumes Ref. 809.31 S47F*

American Short Fiction Criticism and Scholarship Ref. 016.813 W35

20th Century Short Story Explication Ref. 016.813 W26T

**Selected materials from these sources are available online from [Literature Resource Center](#).*

Look for Biographical Information

- **Contemporary Authors** 196 Volumes Ref. 920 C72N (Some are electronically available on [Literature Resource Center](#) and [Biography Resource Center](#))
- **Dictionary of Literary Biography** on [Literature Resource Center](#) (over 10,000 bio-critical essays on authors and their works)