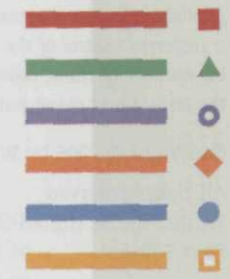


# The Norton Field Guide to Writing

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# 11 Annotated Bibliographies

Annotated bibliographies describe, give publication information for, and sometimes evaluate each work on a list of sources. When we do research, we may consult annotated bibliographies to evaluate potential sources. You may also be assigned to create annotated bibliographies to weigh the potential usefulness of sources and to document your search efforts so that teachers can assess your ability to find, describe, and evaluate sources. There are two kinds of annotations, *descriptive* and *evaluative*; both may be brief, consisting only of phrases, or more formal, consisting of sentences and paragraphs. Sometimes an annotated bibliography is introduced by a short statement explaining its scope.

*Descriptive annotations* simply summarize the contents of each work, without comment or evaluation. They may be very short, just long enough to capture the flavor of the work, like the following excerpt from a bibliography of books and articles on teen films, published in 1997 in the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*.

MICHAEL BENTON, MARK DOLAN, AND REBECCA ZISCH

## Teen Film\$

In the introduction to his book *The Road to Romance and Ruin*, Jon Lewis points out that over half of the world's population is currently under the age of twenty. This rather startling fact should be enough to make most Hollywood producers drool when they think of the potential profits from a target movie audience. Attracting the largest demographic group is, after all, the quickest way to box-office success. In fact, almost from its beginning, the film industry has recognized the importance of the teenaged audience, with characters such as Andy Hardy and locales such as Ridgemont High and the 'hood.

Beyond the assumption that teen films are geared exclusively toward teenagers, however, film researchers should keep in mind that people of all ages have attended and still attend teen films. Popular films about adolescents are also expressions of larger cultural currents. Studying the films is important for understanding an era's common beliefs about its teenaged population within a broader pattern of general cultural preoccupations.

This selected bibliography is intended both to serve and to stimulate interest in the teen film genre. It provides a research tool for those who are studying teen films and their cultural implications. Unfortunately, however, in the process of compiling this list we quickly realized that it was impossible to be genuinely comprehensive or to satisfy every interest.

Doherty, Thomas. Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988. Historical discussion of the identification of teenagers as a targeted film market.

Foster, Harold M. "Film in the Classroom: Coping with Teen Pics." English Journal 76 (1987): 86-88.

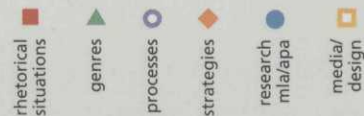
Evaluation of the potential of using teen films such as Sixteen Candles, The Karate Kid, Risky Business, The Flamingo Kid, and The Breakfast Club to instruct adolescents on the difference between film as communication and film as exploitation.

Paul, William. Laughing, Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. Critical history and discussion of the "gross-out" movie, discusses Porky's and Carrie.

Rapping, Elayne. "Hollywood's Youth Cult Films." Cineaste 16 (1987-88): 14-19.

Historical and chronological assessment of the image of teenagers and the "cult of youth" in American movies from James Dean to the characters in River's Edge.

Washington, Michael, and Marvin J. Berlowitz. "Blaxploitation Films and High School Youth: Swat Superfly." Jump Cut 9 (1975): 23-24. Marxist reaction to the trend of youth-oriented black action films. Article seeks to illuminate the negative influences the films have on





high school students by pointing out the false ideas about education, morality, and the black family espoused by the heroes in the films.

*These annotations are purely descriptive; the authors express none of their own opinions. They describe works as “historical” or “Marxist” but do not indicate whether they’re “good.” The bibliography entries are documented in MLA style.*

Sometimes annotations go into much more detail and are more formal, as the following entry from a bibliography on censorship in the United States illustrates:

Downs, Robert Bingham, ed. The First Freedom Today: Critical Issues Relating to Censorship and Intellectual Freedom. Chicago: American Library Association, 1984.

This book is an anthology of writings about censorship and intellectual freedom in the United States. It gives an overview of the history of the subject and examines some of the key issues in the field, especially those that developed during the 1960s and 1970s. It includes excerpts from Thomas Emerson’s writings on the First Amendment and then devotes several chapters to exploring censorship topics, including school textbooks and libraries, obscenity and pornography, the teaching of evolution, and topics of special interest to the press, such as libel, privacy, free press, and fair trial.

Evaluative annotations offer opinions on a source as well as describing it. The following two annotations show how an evaluative annotation can differ from a descriptive one:

#### DESCRIPTIVE ANNOTATION

Krakauer, Jon. Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Krakauer explores the beliefs and sometimes violent actions of fundamentalist Mormons in the western United States. He focuses his study on two brothers who murdered the wife and infant daughter of their younger brother, believing they were acting under orders from God. Krakauer claims that the beliefs motivating their actions have created a climate promoting violent actions against nonbelievers.



#### EVALUATIVE ANNOTATION

Krakauer, Jon. Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

A chilling exploration of the beliefs and sometimes violent actions of fundamentalist Mormons in the western United States. Krakauer focuses his study on two brothers who brutally murdered the wife and infant daughter of their younger brother, believing they were acting under orders from God. Krakauer argues that the beliefs that motivated their fanaticism have created a climate that leads to violent actions against nonbelievers and he invites comparisons with Islamic extremists. The book offers an unflattering portrait of Mormonism in general, as if all Mormons were somehow complicit in the brothers’ extreme actions. It’s an implication that’s hard to credit.

#### Key Features / Annotated Bibliographies

**A statement of scope.** You need a brief introductory statement to explain what you’re covering. The authors of the bibliography on teen films introduce their bibliography with three paragraphs establishing a context for the bibliography and announcing their purpose for compiling it.

**Complete bibliographic information.** Provide all the information about the source following one documentation system (MLA, APA, or another one) so that your readers or other researchers will be able to find each source easily.

**A concise description of the work.** A good annotation describes each item as carefully and objectively as possible, giving accurate information and showing that you understand the source. These qualities will help to build authority—for you as a writer and for your annotations.

**Relevant commentary.** If you write an evaluative bibliography, your comments should be relevant to your purpose and audience. The best way to achieve relevance is to consider what questions a potential reader might have about the sources. The evaluative annotation of the Krakauer book, for example, assumes readers will want to know more than just what the



book is about and gives some sense of the book's tone and the controversy surrounding it.

**Consistent presentation.** All annotations should follow a consistent pattern: if one is written in complete sentences, they should all be. Each annotation in the teen films bibliography, for example, begins with a phrase (not a complete sentence) characterizing the work.

## A BRIEF GUIDE TO WRITING

### Considering the Rhetorical Situation

3-4

■ **PURPOSE** Will your bibliography need to demonstrate the depth or breadth of your research? Will your readers actually track down and use your sources? Do you need or want to convince readers that your sources are good?

5-8

■ **AUDIENCE** For whom are you compiling this bibliography? What does your audience need or want to know about each source?

12-14

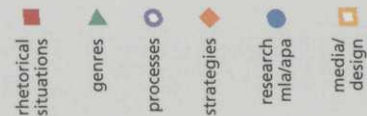
■ **STANCE** Are you presenting yourself as an objective describer or evaluator? Or are you expressing a particular point of view toward the sources you evaluate?

15-17

■ **MEDIA / DESIGN** If you are publishing the bibliography online, will you provide links from each annotation to the source itself? Online or off, do you need to distinguish the bibliographic information from the annotation by using a different font?

### Generating Ideas and Text

**Decide what sources to include.** You may be tempted to include in a bibliography every source you find or look at. A better strategy is to include only those sources that you or your readers may find potentially useful in



researching your topic. For an academic bibliography, you need to consider these qualities:

- **Appropriateness.** Is this source relevant to your topic? Is it a primary source or a secondary source? Is it aimed at an appropriate audience? General or specialized? Elementary, advanced, or somewhere in between?
- **Credibility.** Is the author reputable? Is the publication or publishing company reputable? Do its ideas more or less agree with those in other sources you've read?
- **Balance.** Does the source present enough evidence for its assertions? Does it show any particular bias? Does it present countering arguments fairly?
- **Timeliness.** Is the source recent enough? Does it reflect current thinking or research about the subject?

If you need help **FINDING SOURCES**, see Chapter 40.

**Compile a list of works to annotate.** Give the sources themselves in whatever documentation style is required; see the guidelines for **MLA** and **APA** styles in Chapters 45 and 46.

**Determine what kind of bibliography you need to write.** Descriptive or evaluative? Will your annotations be in the form of phrases? complete sentences? paragraphs? The form will shape your reading and note taking. If you're writing a descriptive bibliography, your reading goal will be to understand and capture the writer's message as clearly as possible. If you're writing an evaluative bibliography, your annotations must also include your own comments on the source.

**Read carefully.** To write an annotation, you must understand the source's argument, but when you are writing an annotated bibliography as part of a **PROPOSAL**, you may have neither the time nor the need to read the whole text. Here's a way of quickly determining whether a source is likely to serve your needs:

- Check the publisher or sponsor (university press? scholarly journal? popular magazine? Web site sponsored by a reputable organization?).

340-53

378-416

417-49

160-67



- Read the preface (of a book), abstract (of a scholarly article), introduction (of an article in a nonscholarly magazine, or a Web site).
- Skim the table of contents or the headings.
- Read the parts that relate specifically to your topic.

**Research the writer, if necessary.** If you are required to indicate the writer's credentials, you may need to do additional research. You may find information by typing the writer's name into a search engine or looking up the writer in *Contemporary Authors*. In any case, information about the writer should take up no more than one sentence in your annotation.

285-93 ◆

**Summarize the work in a sentence or two.** **DESCRIBE** it as objectively as possible: even if you are writing an evaluative annotation, you can evaluate the central point of a work better by stating it clearly first. *If you're writing a descriptive annotation, you're done.*

120-26 ▲

**Establish criteria for evaluating sources.** If you're **EVALUATING** sources for a project, you'll need to evaluate them in terms of their usefulness for your project, their **STANCE**, and their overall credibility.

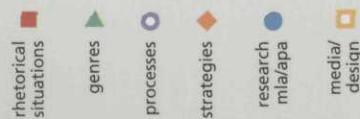
12-14 ■

**Write a brief evaluation of the source.** If you can generalize about the worth of the entire work, fine. You may find, however, that some parts are useful while others are not, and what you write should reflect that mix.

**Be consistent**—in content, sentence structure, and format.

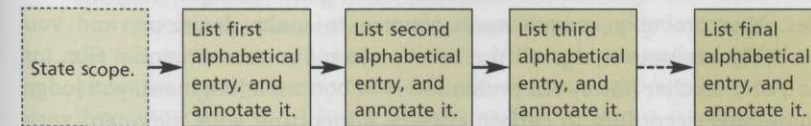
- **Content.** Try to provide about the same amount of information for each entry; if you're evaluating, evaluate each source, not just some sources.
- **Sentence structure.** Use the same style throughout—complete sentences, brief phrases, or a mix.
- **Format.** Use one documentation style throughout; use consistent **TYPE** for each element in each entry—for example, italicize or underline all book titles.

454-55 □



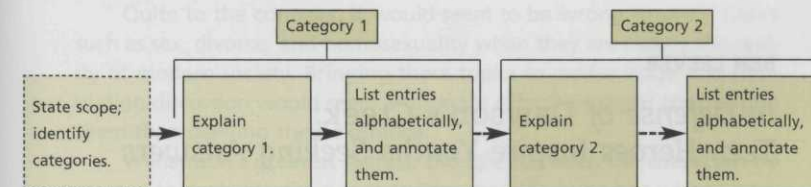
## Ways of Organizing an Annotated Bibliography

Depending on their purpose, annotated bibliographies may or may not include an introduction. Most annotated bibliographies cover a single topic and so are organized alphabetically by author's or editor's last name. When a work lacks a named author, alphabetize it by the first important word in its title. Consult the documentation system you're using for additional details about alphabetizing works appropriately.



Sometimes an annotated bibliography needs to be organized into several subject areas (or genres, periods, or some other category) and the entries are listed alphabetically within each category. For example, a bibliography about terrorism breaks down into subjects such as "Global Terrorism" and "Weapons of Mass Destruction."

### [Multi-category bibliography]



## If You Need More Help

See Chapter 23 for guidelines on **DRAFTING**, Chapter 24 on **ASSESSING YOUR DRAFT**, Chapter 25 on **GETTING RESPONSE AND REVISING**, and Chapter 26 on **EDITING AND PROOFREADING**. See Chapter 27 if you are required to submit your bibliography in a writing **PORTFOLIO**.

205-35 ○