

CHOOSING A TOPIC

[Chapter 43](#) discussed the importance of reading a work closely and taking careful notes as a means of generating topics for writing about literature. If you know a work well and record your understanding of it in notes, you'll have impressions and ideas to choose from for potential topics. You may find it useful to review the information on prewriting before reading the advice about putting together a research paper in this chapter.

The student author of the sample research paper "[How William Faulkner's Narrator Cultivates a Rose for Emily](#)" was asked to write a five-page paper that demonstrated some familiarity with published critical perspectives on a Faulkner story of his choice. Before looking into critical discussions of the story, he read "A Rose for Emily" several times, taking notes and making comments in the margin of his textbook on each reading.

What prompted his choice of "A Rose for Emily" was a class discussion in which many of his classmates found the story's title inappropriate or misleading because they could not understand how and why the story constituted a tribute to Emily given that she murdered a man and slept with his dead body over many years. The gruesome surprise ending revealing Emily as a murderer and necrophiliac hardly seemed to warrant a rose and a tribute for the central character. Why did Faulkner use such a title? Only after

having thoroughly examined the story did the student go to the library to see what professional critics had to say about this question.

FINDING SOURCES

Whether your college library is large or small, its reference librarians can usually help you locate secondary sources about a particular work or author. Unless you choose a very recently published story, poem, play, or essay about which little or nothing has been written, you should be able to access sources, probably more than you would guess. Your college or university library is designed to give you access to excellent, useful information. The problem many students face is that too much information is available. If you were writing an essay on *Othello* and military history and you typed “William Shakespeare” into a search engine, you would come up with tens of thousands of sources and you would have countless hours of work ahead of you sifting through them to find a useful one. Part of the art of finding sources is knowing the right way to limit your search, just as the way to knowledge is through asking the right questions.

The image of a library as a cold, dusty space where severe-looking women shush you whenever you whisper is antiquated, and was probably never completely accurate. Libraries are some of the most exciting spaces that have adapted to and even helped to create our so-called Information Age. Just as students are sometimes intimidated by the very word *research*, they can also cower at the door of their college library, daunted by the sheer amount of wisdom it seems to contain or unsure where to start sifting through

it. Your library, though, is a resource that was designed for you. Think of the offices on campus that exist to ensure your success: the registrar, financial aid, admissions, counseling ... the list is long. All of these offices employ people whose job is to help you access their services, and you have no doubt learned the value of communicating with them. If you're feeling uncertain about how to go about your research, your reference librarians are there to help you to get started. They are trained professionals who tend to love the very challenge that you might find mysterious: locating sources.

In addition to being valuable human resources, librarians have also worked hard to design a web site that helps you navigate their holdings, many of which are electronic as opposed to print sources. Libraries increasingly provide online databases that you can access from home. This can be an efficient way to locate sources on your own schedule. There also might be a way to contact your reference librarians through that web site with questions. As we suggest above, these employees of your college or university are funded through your tuition dollars: you should become comfortable asking them questions just as you would ask your professor to clarify something she said in class, or to guide you if you are having trouble with a writing assignment. Like your professors, research librarians are teachers who are eager to help you.

Some of the articles you locate through your library's databases are also available on the Internet, but know from the outset that the open Internet does not discriminate between a valid work of literary

criticism and a blog post or tweet. In addition to the many electronic databases available, including your library's computerized holdings, the Internet also connects millions of sites with primary sources (the full texts of stories, poems, plays, and essays) and secondary sources (biography or criticism). If you have not had practice with academic research on the Web, it is a good idea to get guidance from your instructor or a librarian, and by using your library's home page as a starting point. Browsing on the Internet can be absorbing as well as informative, and you are undoubtedly comfortable with the ease of Googling a term and finding what you were looking for on the first page of hits. Literary research isn't quite the same process, though. You're not simply looking for information; you're encountering a range of perspectives that might fall outside the algorithms used by Internet search engines. Your library's databases are adept at organizing these sources for your discovery. Some common databases useful for this type of research are the MLA International Bibliography, JSTOR, Project Muse, and Academic Search Premier. We cannot anticipate your library's holdings, though: an important early step for your research is to familiarize yourself with them. You should also note the difference between databases that link to a full-text article or e-book and those that do not. If there is a link to a full-text source, you automatically have access to it with a click of your mouse. If not, your library may or may not have access to that article or book. Part of the challenge is finding the sources that will be useful to you, but finding them isn't always the same as being able to get your hands on them. We can't stress enough the value of familiarizing yourself with what your

library offers and what its limitations are. The same can be said for the Internet: its powers and reach are not limitless, and it may not provide what you're looking for, or it may not present it when you approach it in customary ways.

EVALUATING SOURCES AND TAKING NOTES

If your instructor specifies the minimum number of sources you need for your research paper, you might be focused on that number. But the number of sources you find is not as important as the usefulness of those sources for your purposes. If you were to locate seventeen articles and two books on your topic, would you just choose the first three you found to fulfill the requirement? What if one of those three was a Wikipedia entry and another was Shmoop? Finding sources is only the first step: evaluating them is the second.

By “evaluate,” we mean that you should assess the sources you find for reliability and the quality of their evidence. It is not always immediately clear, but there are some attributes that distinguish reliable sources from their counterparts. Shmoop and Wikipedia entries, for instance, generally are not attributed to an author, which is a sign that they are not the kind of source considered valid for a research paper. A popular magazine article, though it might be useful to your argument, will probably not be as suitable to the rhetorical purpose of your paper as an article in a scholarly journal will be. You should approach secondary sources just as you approach primary sources: as texts to be analyzed and interpreted. You should be able to summarize them, appreciate their rhetorical

purpose, and quote from them, similar to the way you would position yourself in relation to one of your primary texts.

Just as you are being asked to document your sources in a Works Cited page or bibliography, the sources you find that cite other sources indicate their academic substance. Sources that are well documented with primary and secondary materials usually indicate that the author has done his or her homework. Books printed by university presses and established trade presses tend to be preferable to books privately printed. As with articles in scholarly journals, books printed by university presses are subject to a lengthy process of peer review, meaning that experts in the field have attested to their value and importance. In some ways, these experts have done the work of evaluation for you. This is not to say that all scholarly articles or books published by university presses are equally valuable, or readable, or useful to your argument, but rather to suggest that they are substantial and that they are taken seriously as part of an established field of study.

Citations are another key. If you find six articles on a subject that all refer to a single article, it is probably important for you to locate that article. Its author is likely to be considered an expert or an important voice in that field. In academia this is referred to as an “impact factor,” meaning that certain articles or critics have had a profound effect, or impact, on the way a work has been read, and other critics are compelled to contend in some way with that important source. If every article you read about your topic says

something like, “According to Rowson ...,” you would do well to find Rowson’s text, and you can assume it is worth consulting.

Finally, think about when your source was published. This is not to suggest that the most recent articles or books are automatically the most valuable ones, but rather to consider their ongoing importance. A book published in 1957 isn’t likely to be the most current work available on the text you are writing about, though it may have had a large impact on the way the source has been interpreted since 1957. A recently published source can help you locate important sources that preceded it. These sources can be helpful in both finding and evaluating sources that you can use. Also, if you are using one of the more recent critical strategies described in [Chapter 42](#), a book published in 1957 would not be as useful. What we have come to understand as gender-based approaches to criticism, for example, would not have been available to a 1957 critic.

As you prepare a list of reliable sources relevant to your topic, record the necessary bibliographic information so that it will be available when you make up the list of works cited for your paper. It is good practice to keep a record of all of the sources you consult initially. You may not know which sources you will ultimately use, so it is wise to play it safe and record all of them. You don’t want to create an extra step for yourself later on in the process by forcing yourself to track down a source a second time. For a book, include the author, editor, and/or translator, complete title, publisher, and

date of publication. For an article, include the author, complete title of the article, name of periodical, volume number, date of issue, and page numbers. For an Internet source, include the author, complete title, database title, periodical or site name, date of posting of the site (or last update), name of the institution or organization, date when you accessed the source, and its URL beginning with www (no need to include http://).

We will give specific information about how to organize these sources into a Works Cited below, but for now you can just have them as a list. Note that some online articles help you by linking to citation information. Once you have assembled a collection of sources that you may cite, you will need to take notes on your readings. Be sure to keep track of where the information comes from by writing the author's name and page number. If you use more than one work by the same author, include a brief title as well as the author's name.

DEVELOPING A DRAFT, INTEGRATING SOURCES, AND ORGANIZING THE PAPER

[Chapter 43](#) describes the writing process for a standard literary analysis without research. The research paper adds the steps we describe above: locating, evaluating, and documenting sources. The other step is to integrate this work into your argument. There is no real formula for how much of the content of your research paper should be devoted to your analysis and how much to the sources you will incorporate. Your instructor's assignment may dictate this proportion, or you might consult directly with your instructor if you are unclear about this balance. In most cases, your essay will be constructed primarily of your ideas, and the sources you incorporate will help frame or support them. The key is to allow the secondary sources to contribute to rather than to inhibit the flow of your paper. It is generally evident when a writer has tacked on a quotation or two from outside sources just to fulfill the requirement of a research paper. You should think carefully about what benefits you gain by including the voice of another critic at a certain point in your paper. Are you using that source to give substance to what you are saying? Are you resisting or disagreeing with the critic? Is the source a stepping stone to help you advance a point that is key to your argument? All of these are valid reasons for bringing a secondary

source into your paper, but you should be aware of how you are positioning the critical source within your argument.

Just as you might strategically summarize a story prior to quoting from it, you should consider whether it is necessary to do the same as you introduce a source. Chances are that the critical essay you've read is complex and lengthier than the essay you are writing. It is advantageous to give your reader a sense of the overall argument, not just to lift out a sentence from the essay that might not make sense without context. While taking notes on your sources, you would do well to summarize each article in a few sentences. (In fact, your instructor might require a formal version of such summaries, known as an annotated bibliography.) Even if this is not a requirement, you may be able to use your summary in the body of the paper, or it may serve as a reminder to you of the source's value to your argument.

It is an open question as to whether the location and evaluation of sources should be done during the prewriting, writing, or revision stage of your process. If you have already selected a topic and begun to gather ideas in writing, your search for valid sources will be more efficient because you will have a clearer idea of exactly what you want to say. If you wait until too late in the drafting process to conduct research, your argument may not be as flexible in terms of allowing these sources to work their way into your essay. It is best to think of the process as a fluid one in which your research and your writing cooperate instead of being two separate activities. You do

not want your research to box you into a corner and limit what you want to say, nor do you want to write your paper completely and then go searching for sources that might be employed to chime in after your thesis is complete.

To return to our student example, as the notes on “A Rose for Emily” accumulated, the student sorted them into topics:

1. Publication history of the story
2. Faulkner on the title of “A Rose for Emily”
3. Is Emily simply insane?
4. The purpose of Emily’s servant
5. The narrator
6. The townspeople’s view of Emily
7. The surprise ending
8. Emily’s admirable qualities
9. Homer’s character

The student quickly saw that items 1, 4, and 9 were not directly related to his topic concerning the significance of the story’s title. The remaining numbers (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8) are the topics taken up in the paper. The student had begun his reading of secondary sources

with a working thesis that stemmed from his question about the appropriateness of the title. That “why” shaped itself into the expectation that his final thesis would look something like this: “The title justifies Emily’s murder of Homer because . . .”

The author assumed that he would find information that indicated some specific reason. But the more he read, the more he discovered that it was possible to speak only about how the narrator prevents the reader from making a premature judgment about Emily rather than justifying her actions. Hence, he wisely changed his working thesis to this final thesis: “The narrator describes incidents and withholds information in such a way as to cause the reader to sympathize with Emily before her crime is revealed.” This thesis helped the student explain why the title is accurate and useful rather than misleading.

After writing your first draft, you should review the advice and revision checklist in [Chapter 43](#) so that you can read your paper with an objective eye. When writing a research paper, you should use this time to carefully scrutinize the sources you have brought into your essay (or the ones you still want to bring into it). Two days after writing his next-to-last draft, the writer of “How William Faulkner’s Narrator Cultivates a Rose for Emily” realized that he had allotted too much space for critical discussions of the narrator that were not directly related to his approach. He wanted to demonstrate a familiarity with these studies, but it was not essential that he summarize or discuss them. He corrected this by consolidating

parenthetical references: “Though a number of studies discuss the story’s narrator (see, for example, Curry; Kempton; Sullivan; and Watkins). . . .” His earlier draft had included summaries of these studies that were tangential to his argument. The point is that he saw this himself after he took some time to approach the paper from a fresh perspective and to reconsider the relationship between his developing thesis and the sources he had located. If he had been rigid about the way he thought he was going to use his sources or if he had been completely unaware of what other critics had written at that point, his final draft would not have emerged the same way.

DOCUMENTING SOURCES AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

You must acknowledge the use of a source when you (1) quote someone's exact words, (2) summarize or borrow someone's opinions or ideas, or (3) use information and facts that are not considered to be common knowledge. The purpose of this documentation is to acknowledge your sources, to demonstrate that you are familiar with what others have thought about the topic, and to provide your reader access to the same sources. If your paper is not adequately documented, it will be vulnerable to a charge of *plagiarism* — the presentation of someone else's work as your own. Academic plagiarism is a serious offense that your instructor and your college or university strongly discourages. It is a form of theft and it is antithetical to the hard work expected of you on the path to becoming a better writer and critical thinker. Conscious plagiarism is easy to avoid; honesty takes care of that for most people. However, there is an unconscious form of plagiarism that is often inadvertent yet just as problematic. To paraphrase a writer's ideas without attribution or to alter some of that author's language and claim it as your own is in the same category as including the author's language without citing it.

Let's look more closely at what constitutes plagiarism. Consider the following passage quoted from John Gassner's introduction to *Four*

Great Plays by Henrik Ibsen (Bantam Books, 1959), p. viii:

Today it seems incredible that *A Doll's House* should have created the furor it did. In exploding Victorian ideals of feminine dependency the play seemed revolutionary in 1879. When its heroine Nora left her home in search of self-development it seemed as if the sanctity of marriage had been flouted by a playwright treading the stage with cloven-feet.

Now read this plagiarized version:

A Doll's House created a furor in 1879 by blowing up Victorian ideals about a woman's place in the world. Nora's search for self-fulfillment outside her home appeared to be an attack on the sanctity of marriage by a cloven-footed playwright.

Though the writer has shortened the passage and made some changes in the wording, this paragraph is basically the same as Gassner's. Indeed, several of his phrases are lifted almost intact. Even if a parenthetical reference had been included at the end of the passage and the source included in the Works Cited, the language of this passage would still be plagiarism because it is presented as the writer's own. Both language and ideas must be acknowledged.

Here is an adequately documented version of the passage:

John Gassner has observed how difficult it is for today's readers to comprehend the intense reaction against *A Doll's House* in 1879. When Victorian audiences watched Nora walk out of her stifling marriage, they assumed that Ibsen was expressing a devilish contempt for the "sanctity of marriage" (viii).

This passage makes absolutely clear that the observation is Gassner's, and it is written in the student's own language with the exception of one quoted phrase. Had Gassner not been named in the passage, the parenthetical reference would have included his name: (Gassner viii).

Some mention should be made of the notion of common knowledge before we turn to the standard format for documenting sources. Observations and facts that are widely known and routinely included in many of your sources do not require documentation. It is not necessary to cite a source for the fact that Alfred, Lord Tennyson was born in 1809 or that Ernest Hemingway lived for a time in Paris. Sometimes it will be difficult for you to determine what common knowledge is for a topic that you know little about. If you are in doubt, the best strategy is to supply a reference.

There are two basic ways to document sources. Traditionally, sources have been cited in footnotes at the bottom of each page or in endnotes grouped together at the end of the paper. Here is how a

portion of the sample paper would look if footnotes were used instead of parenthetical documentation:

As Heller points out, before we learn of Emily's bizarre behavior we see her as a sympathetic—if antiquated—figure in a town whose life and concerns have passed her by; hence, “we are disposed to see Emily as victimized.”¹

¹ Terry Heller, “The Telltale Hair: A Critical Study of William Faulkner's ‘A Rose for Emily,’ ” *Arizona Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1972, p. 306.

Unlike endnotes, which are double spaced throughout under the title of “Notes” on separate pages at the end of the paper, footnotes appear four spaces below the text. They are single spaced with double spaces between notes.

No doubt you will have encountered these documentation methods in your reading. A different style is recommended, however, in the Modern Language Association's *MLA Handbook*, Eighth Edition (2016). This style employs parenthetical references within the text of the paper; these are keyed to an alphabetical list of Works Cited at the end of the paper. This method is designed to be less distracting for the reader. (An excellent web site that describes the MLA style and other citation methods is the Online Writing Lab from Purdue University, commonly known as the Purdue OWL [www.owl.purdue.edu].) Unless you are instructed to follow the footnote or endnote style for documentation, use the parenthetical method explained in the next section.

The List of Works Cited

Items in the list of works cited are arranged alphabetically according to the author's last name and indented a half inch after the first line. This allows the reader to locate quickly the complete bibliographic information for the author's name cited within the parenthetical reference in the text. The following are common entries for literature papers and should be used as models. The student essays throughout this book also follow this style and you can use them as models, though many of them are not research papers and only cite this anthology as their single source. If some of your sources are of a different nature (such as films or music), consult the *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition* (MLA, 2016); or, for the latest updates, check MLA's Web site at style.mla.org.

The following entries include examples to follow when citing electronic sources. For electronic sources, include as many of the following elements as apply and as are available:

- Author's name
- Title of work (if it's a book, italicized; if it's a short work, such as an article or poem, use quotation marks)
- Title of the site (or of the publication, if you're citing an online periodical, for example), italicized
- Sponsor or publisher of the site (if not named as the author)
- Date of publication or last update
- Date you accessed the source

- URL

A BOOK BY ONE AUTHOR

Hendrickson, Robert. *The Literary Life and Other Curiosities*. Viking Press, 1981.

AN ONLINE BOOK

Frost, Robert. *A Boy's Will*. Henry Holt, 1915.
Bartleby.com: Great Books Online, 1999,
www.bartleby.com/117/.

PART OF AN ONLINE BOOK

Frost, Robert. "Into My Own." *A Boy's Will*.
Henry Holt, 1915. *Bartleby.com: Great Books
Online*, 1999, www.bartleby.com/117/1.html.

Notice that the author's name is in reverse order (last name first, separated by a comma). This information, along with the full title, publisher, and date, should be taken from the title and copyright pages of the book. The title is italicized and is also followed by a period. Use the publication date on the title page; if none appears there, use the copyright date (after ©) on the back of the title page.

A BOOK BY TWO AUTHORS

Horton, Rod W., and Herbert W. Edwards.

Backgrounds of American Literary Thought,
3rd ed. Prentice-Hall, 1974.

Only the first author's name is given in reverse order. The edition number appears after the title.

A BOOK WITH MORE THAN TWO AUTHORS

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., et al., editors. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 3rd ed. W. W. Norton, 2014.

(Note: The abbreviation *et al.* means "and others.")

A WORK IN A COLLECTION BY THE SAME AUTHOR

O'Connor, Flannery. "Greenleaf." *The Complete Stories*, by Flannery O'Connor. Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1971, pp. 311-34.

Page numbers are given because the reference is to only a single story in the collection.

A WORK IN A COLLECTION BY DIFFERENT WRITERS

Frost, Robert. "Design." *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*, edited by Michael Meyer and D. Quentin Miller, 12th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2020, p. 774.

Packer, ZZ. "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere." *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*, edited by Michael Meyer and D. Quentin Miller, 12th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2020, pp. 426-38.

The titles of poems and short stories are enclosed in quotation marks; plays and novels are italicized.

CROSS-REFERENCE TO A COLLECTION

When citing more than one work from the same collection, use a cross-reference to avoid repeating the same bibliographic information that appears in the main entry for the collection.

Frost, Robert. "Design." Meyer and Miller, p. 774.

Meyer, Michael and D. Quentin Miller, editors. *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*, 12th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2020.

O'Connor, Flannery. "Revelation." Meyer and Miller, pp. 303-16.

Packer, ZZ. "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere." Meyer and Miller, pp. 426-38.

A TRANSLATED BOOK

Grass, Günter. *The Tin Drum*. Translated by Ralph Manheim, Pantheon Books, 1962.

AN INTRODUCTION, PREFACE, FOREWORD, OR AFTERWORD

Johnson, Thomas H. Introduction. *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems*, by Emily Dickinson, Little, Brown, 1961, pp. vii-xiv.

This cites the introduction by Johnson. Notice that a colon is used between the book's main title and subtitle. To cite a poem in this book, use this method:

Dickinson, Emily. "A Tooth upon Our Peace."
Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems,
edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Little, Brown,
1961, p. 110.

AN ENTRY IN AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Robinson, Lisa Clayton. "Harlem Writers Guild."
*Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African
and African American Experience*. 2nd ed.
Oxford UP, 2005.

AN ARTICLE IN A MAGAZINE

Morrow, Lance. "Scribble, Scribble, Eh, Mr.
Toad?" *Time*, 24 Feb. 1986, p. 84.

AN ARTICLE FROM AN ONLINE MAGAZINE

Wasserman, Elizabeth. "The Byron Complex."
TheAtlantic.com, 1 Oct. 2002,
www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2002/10/the-byron-complex/378504/.

The citation for an unsigned article would begin with the title and be alphabetized by the first word of the title other than "a," "an," or "the."

AN ARTICLE IN A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL WITH CONTINUOUS PAGINATION BEYOND A SINGLE ISSUE

Fuqua, Amy. "'The Furrow of His Brow':
Providence and Pragmatism in Toni Morrison's

Paradise." *Midwest Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1, Autumn 2012, pp. 38–52.

Regardless of whether the journal uses continuous pagination or separate pagination for each issue, it is necessary to include the volume number and the issue number for every entry. If a journal does not offer an issue number, use only the volume number, as in the next entry. If a journal uses *only* issue numbers, use that in place of the volume number.

AN ARTICLE IN A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL WITH SEPARATE PAGINATION FOR EACH ISSUE

Updike, John. "The Cultural Situation of the American Writer." *American Studies International*, vol. 15, 1977, pp. 19–28.

In the following citation, noting the winter issue helps a reader find the correct article among all of the articles published by the online journal in 2004.

AN ARTICLE FROM AN ONLINE SCHOLARLY JOURNAL

Mamet, David. "Secret Names." *Threepenny Review*, Vol. 96, Winter 2004, www.threepennyreview.com/samples/mamet_w04.html.

AN ARTICLE IN A NEWSPAPER

The following citation indicates that the article appears on page 1 of section 7 and continues onto another page.

Ziegler, Philip. "The Lure of Gossip, the Rules of History." *The New York Times*, 23 Feb. 1986, sec. 7, pp. 1+.

AN ARTICLE FROM AN ONLINE NEWSPAPER

Brantley, Ben. "Souls Lost and Doomed Enliven London Stages." *The New York Times*, 4 Feb. 2004,
www.nytimes.com/2004/02/04/theater/critic-s-notebook-souls-lost-and-doomed-enliven-london-stages.html.

A LECTURE

Tilton, Robert. "The Beginnings of American Studies." English 270 class lecture, University of Connecticut, Storrs, 12 Mar. 2016.

LETTER, E-MAIL, OR INTERVIEW

Vellenga, Carolyn. Letter to the author, 9 Oct. 2018.

Harter, Stephen P. E-mail to the author, 28 Dec. 2017.

McConagha, Bill. Personal interview, 9 May 2016.

Following are additional examples for citing electronic sources.

WORK FROM A SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Libraries pay for access to databases such as *LexisNexis*, *ProQuest*, and *Expanded Academic Premier*. When you retrieve an article or other work from a subscription database, cite your source based on these models:

Macari, Anne Marie. "Lyric Impulse in a Time of Extinction." *American Poetry Review*, vol. 44, no. 4, July/Aug. 2015, pp. 11-14.
General OneFile, go.galegroup.com.

Vendler, Helen Hennessey. "The Passion of Emily Dickinson." *New Republic*, 3 Aug. 1992, pp. 34-38. *Expanded Academic ASAP*, go.galegroup.com.

A DOCUMENT FROM A WEB SITE

When citing sources from the Internet, include as much publication information as possible (see “[Documenting Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism](#)”). In some cases, as in the following example, a date of publication for the document “Dickens in America” is not available. The entry provides the author, title of document, title of site, access date, and URL:

Perdue, David. “Dickens in America.” David
Perdue’s Charles Dickens Page, 13 Apr. 2016,
charlesdickenspage.com/america.html.

AN ENTIRE WEB SITE

Perdue, David. David Perdue’s Charles Dickens
Page, 13 Apr. 2016, charlesdickenspage.com.

AN ONLINE POSTING

Bedford English. “Stacey Cochran explores
Reflective Writing in the classroom and as a
writer: <http://ow.ly/YkjVB>.” Facebook, 15
Feb. 2016,
[www.facebook.com/BedfordEnglish/posts/101534
15001259607](https://www.facebook.com/BedfordEnglish/posts/10153415001259607).

Parenthetical References

A list of works cited is not an adequate indication of how you have used sources in your paper. You must also provide the precise location of quotations and other information by using parenthetical references within the text of the paper. You do this by citing the author's name (or the source's title if the work is anonymous) and the page number:

Collins points out that "Nabokov was misunderstood by early reviewers of his work" (28).

or

Nabokov's first critics misinterpreted his stories (Collins 28).

Either way a reader will find the complete bibliographic entry in the list of works cited under Collins's name and know that the information cited in the paper appears on page 28. Notice that the end punctuation comes after the parentheses.

If you have listed more than one work by the same author, you would add a brief title to the parenthetical reference to distinguish between them. You could also include the full title in your text:

Nabokov's first critics misinterpreted his stories (Collins, "Early Reviews" 28).

or

Collins points out in “Early Reviews of Nabokov’s Fiction” that Nabokov’s early work was misinterpreted by reviewers (28).

For electronic sources, provide the author’s name. Unless your online source is a stable, paginated document (such as a pdf file), do not include page numbers in your parenthetical references. The following example shows an in-text citation to William Faulkner’s acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature, found at the Nobel Web site.

William Faulkner believed that it was his duty as a writer to “help man endure by lifting his heart” (Faulkner).

This reference would appear in the works cited list as follows:

Faulkner, William. “Banquet Speech: The Nobel Prize in Literature.” Nobelprize.org, 10 Dec. 1950, nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1949/faulkner-speech.html.

There can be many variations on what is included in a parenthetical reference, depending on the nature of the entry in the list of works cited. But the general principle is simple enough: provide enough parenthetical information for a reader to find the work in “Works Cited.” Examine the sample research paper for more examples of

works cited and strategies for including parenthetical references. If you are puzzled by a given situation, refer to the *MLA Handbook*.