AMERICAN LITERATURE RESEARCH GUIDE

Find Books   Find Articles   Suggested Websites   Citing Sources
Research Process Guide   Library Assistance

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Find Books

Library Catalog: Print and E-books

Students may search the catalog for print and e-books owned by the Vernon College Library System. Use the dropdown menus to limit your search by location and/or by author, title, or subject terms.

> **E-books**: To search only for titles available electronically, select "Online" as the desired location. Use the dropdown menu to choose your search method (author, title, subject terms, etc.), then enter your search term.
>
> *Helpful feature*: While viewing a book, select the "Search" tab to bring up a search bar, which will allow you to locate a word or phrase within the entire contents of the e-book.
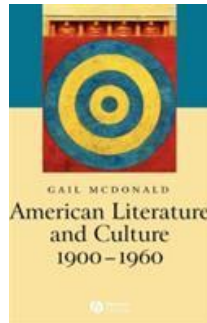
Featured Titles
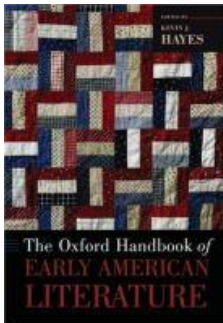
The Oxford handbook of early American literature
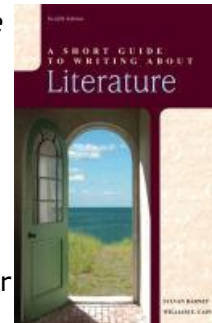
Kevin J. Hayes, editor

PS185 .O94 2008
Vernon

American literature and culture, 1900-1960

Gail McDonald

PS221 .M394 2007
Century City Center

A short guide to writing about literature
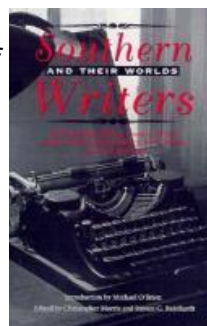
Sylvan Barnet, William E. Cain

PE1479.C7 B3 2012
Century City Center

A literary history of the American West

Western Literature Association

PS271 .L58 1987
Vernon

Southern writers and their worlds

Christopher Morris and Steven G. Reinhardt, editors

E-book

A literary history of New England

Perry D. Westbrook

E-book

**Reference Books**: Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, etc.

Reference materials offer background information and broad overviews of topics. This information is often helpful in narrowing and selecting a specific area of the topic to explore further. Reference materials on literature may provide literary timelines, author biographies, and/or overviews of specific literary works.

Gale contextual encyclopedia of American literature

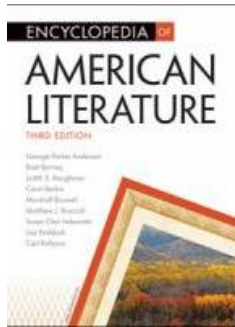Anne Marie Hacht and Dwayne D. Hayes, editors

REF PS21 .G36 2009 Vernon
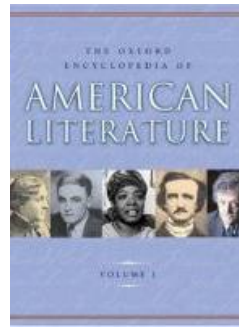
The Oxford encyclopedia of American literature

Jay Parini

REF PS21 .O94 2004 Century City Center

[Encyclopedia of American literature](#)

E-book available through Credo Reference Database

This resource is an extensive reference work that spans the entire scope of American literature, from the colonial period to the present.

[The Continuum encyclopedia of American literature](#)

E-book available through Credo Reference Database

Composed of signed biographical-critical entries, this Encyclopedia serves as both guide and companion to the study and appreciation of American literature.

[The chronology of American literature](#)

E-book available through Credo Reference Database

This book outlines the indispensable information in America's rich literary past— from major publications to lesser-known gems—while also identifying larger trends along the literary timeline.
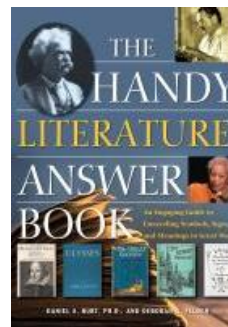
[The handy literature answer book](#)

E-book available through Credo Reference Database

This resource looks at the themes, symbols, context, and other literary devices from many noted short stories, poems, and novels.

Browse the Shelves

Books are arranged according to the Library of Congress Classification System. Materials on American literature are found under the subclass PS.

PS 1-3626	American literature	PS 301-326	Poetry
PS 126-138	Biography, memoirs, letters, etc.	PS 330-353	Drama
		PS 360-380	Prose
PS 147-152	Women authors	PS 501-689	Collections of American literature
PS 163-173	Treatment of special subjects, classes		
		PS 700-3626	Individual authors
PS 185-195	17th-18th centuries	PS 700-893	17th-18th centuries
PS 201-217	19th century	PS 991-3390	19th century
PS 221-228	20th century	PS 3500-3549	1900-1960
PS 229-231	21st century	PS 3550-3576	1961-2000
PS 241-286	Special regions, states, etc.	PS 3600-3626	2001-

Find Articles

Scholarly, peer reviewed articles are available online through the library's databases. All databases are accessible off-campus from any Internet connection. The following databases are good sources to consult for literary criticism and other topics related to American literature.

OFF-CAMPUS ACCESS TO DATABASES:
To search databases off-campus:
- Select **Access to Databases** from the Library Homepage.
- Click on the **Literature/Arts** category.
- Select a database such as **JSTOR**.
- Log-in with your VC student ID number and PIN (without Chaps).

JSTOR: JSTOR offers considerable journal coverage in literature and is a good resource to consult for literary criticism.

Literary Reference Center: The database provides access to literary criticism, work overviews, and author biographies from noted reference works and scholarly literary journals.

Academic Search Complete: This multidisciplinary database provides full-text access to numerous scholarly journals in literature. The database features an intuitive search interface with a number of limiters to help customize the search. Researchers can select "literary criticism" from the "Document Type" drop down menu.

Twentieth Century American Poetry: Twentieth Century American Poetry contains the poetry of over 300 poets, including Adrienne Rich, Andrei Codrescu, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Denise Levertov, Wallace Stevens, Langston Hughes, Lucille Clifton, and Cathy Song.

Suggested Websites

ipl Literary Criticism
https://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/
The ipl Literary Criticism Collection contains critical and biographical websites about authors and their works that can be browsed by author, by title, or by nationality and literary period.

Voice of the Shuttle, American Literature
http://vos.ucsb.edu/browse.asp?id=2739
Managed by the University of California, Santa Barbara, English Department, this website provides a structured and briefly annotated guide to online resources. VoS emphasizes both primary and secondary resources, and defines its audience as people who have something to learn from a higher-education, professional approach to the humanities.

Project Gutenberg
http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page
Project Gutenberg is a library of over 60,000 free eBooks. You will find the world's great literature here, with focus on older works for which U.S. copyright has expired.

Library of Southern Literature
https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/
This digital collection includes over eighty titles of the most important works of Southern literature published before 1920. This site is part of the Documenting the American South Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Citing Sources

Citation Style Guides
- OWL: Purdue Online Writing Lab
  OWL MLA Formatting and Style Guide
- Citation Resources from Tarrant County College Libraries
  MLA Citation Style Guide (Citation style guide for Works Cited page and for in-text citations)
  Information Literacy Workbook
    —Citing Sources and avoiding plagiarism   pages 15-18
    —Database Search Techniques   pages 23-28
    —Selecting and evaluating Internet search engines and websites   pages 29-33
    —Planning, gathering, evaluating, and organizing information on a topic   pages 5-6

The Research Process

The Research Process

1) Select a topic that you find interesting and appropriate for the assignment.

2) Review reference sources such as encyclopedias for background information to help focus or narrow the search.

   For example, students interested in ***Uncle Tom's Cabin*** may consult the Encyclopedia of American literature for ideas in narrowing the focus of the search to a particular area of interest such as how Stowe presents the incompatibility of slavery with the Christian ethic of love and tolerance.

3) Restate the topic as a question. Inquiry is at the heart of the research process, a quest to locate information which answers questions and leads researchers to a greater understanding of the topic.

   Restating the topic as a question will help in:
   - Locating information that is useful and relevant to the primary focus or thesis of your research.
   - Identifying the keywords or phrases to use in the search statement.

   Example: In what ways does **Stowe** present the incompatibility of slavery with the **Christian ethic** of love and tolerance?

4) Develop a search statement by combining keywords or concepts from the research question. For example, "**Stowe**" and "**Christian ethic**" are identified as keywords in the question above. By connecting both terms with the Boolean operator "**and**", the researcher will retrieve only those articles that discuss *both* concepts, thus improving the relevancy of the search.

   Enter in database search fields: **Stowe <u>and</u> Christian ethic**

5) Develop alternate search statements to improve the search results. Authors may use various terms to describe the same concept.

   For example, **Christian ethic** may be used in the same context as **love**.

   By identifying and connecting alternate terms, researchers may expand the search results. As indicated below, consider brainstorming and listing synonyms or word variations to identify alternate keywords.

Concept 1		Concept 2
Christian ethic	AND	Stowe
love	AND	Uncle Tom's Cabin
tolerance	AND	Life among the Lowly

Library Assistance

Email: librarian@vernoncollege.edu

Visit the chat room: Select "Ask the Librarian" from the library homepage.

Phone: 940-552-6291 ext: 2222 in Vernon
        940-696-8752 ext: 3220 at Century City Center

Library Orientation: Discover library services! Find information and video tutorials on accessing articles, e-books, career resources, and library assistance. Find information on reserving group study rooms in Vernon or at Century City Center.

Library Webinars: View a schedule and register to participate in one of the library's weekly webinars.

Library Handbook