I. BEFORE GETTING STARTED

- Ask a librarian for assistance.
- Determine what type of literature you are dealing with: is it a novel, short story, poem or play? Is it a modern, 19th Century, or ancient work? Is it by an American or an author from a different country?
- What type of information do you need? Do you need biographical information about the author? Do you need critical essays discussing specific novels or plays? Do you need both?
- Select an appropriate reference work or database (such as the online Literature Resource Center) from the listings below.

II. ESSENTIAL ELECTRONIC RESOURCES FOR LITERARY RESEARCH

A. LITERATURE RESOURCE CENTER

Available on the library’s Find Articles (click on Databases A-Z) page, this database is probably the first place to check when seeking information on authors and literary criticism from all time periods in such genres as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, journalism, etc. Available in the Literature Resource Center are many ways of searching for both...
biographical and critical information about the author and his or her works. Here you will find electronic versions of many traditional library reference sources published by Gale, such as *Contemporary Authors, Contemporary Literary Criticism Select*, the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and numerous full-text literary periodicals.

Also, you will find many selections from Gale publications such as *Children’s Literature Review, Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism, Drama Criticism, Drama for Students, Literature from 1400 to 1800, Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Literature of Developing Nations for Students, Literature and Its Times, Novels for Students, Poetry Criticism, Poetry for Students, Shakespearean Criticism, Shakespeare for Students, Short Story Criticism, Short Stories for Students,* and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism."

In addition, you will find *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary,* and the *Gale Literary Index* to many Gale print publications also found in Shake Library’s Reference Collection (see print sources below).

B. LTFINDER
Available on the library’s Find Articles page (select Databases A-Z), LitFinder is a Gale database that contains the full text of many primary literary works: poems, short stories, plays, essays and speeches. LitFinder contains both biographical and critical works. Note: The Literature Resource Center (above) also searches this resource simultaneously.

C. CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS
Available on the library’s Find Articles page (select Databases A-Z), *Contemporary Authors* is the online version of the traditional print reference series by Gale. It provides authoritative biographical information about authors.

D. SALEM LITERATURE (Masterplots and Magill’s)
Available on the library’s Find Books and eBooks page. Access Salem Literature, which lets you search the contents of major literary research sources *Magill’s Masterplots* and *Masterplots* (4th ed.).

*Masterplots* (4th ed.): This has been a classic literary reference work for more than sixty years. Masterplots analyzes the most important works in all genres—long fiction, short fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction—throughout history and internationally, helping to define and critique the literary canon. Masterplots contains over 2,000 essays.

*Magill's Literary Annual*, now in its 57th year, covers 1977-2010 with articles about recent works of fiction and nonfiction across subjects, genres, and countries. Each year, Magill’s Literary Annual critically evaluates 200 major examples of serious literature, both fiction and nonfiction, published during the previous calendar year.

III. ADDITIONAL ELECTRONIC RESOURCES FOR LITERARY RESEARCH (PERIODICALS AND EBOOKS)
Access the resources below by visiting the Find Articles page, then Databases A-Z

A. EBSCOhost (INSPIRE) ACADEMIC SEARCH PREMIER (PERIODICAL ARTICLES)

Academic Search Premier provides access to scholarly journals and other publications from a wide range of academic areas, including social sciences, humanities, education, general sciences, multi-cultural and general reference. Listed below are several full text literary journals available. Many of these should include critical reviews of literary works. Note: * denotes outstanding journal providing critical reviews.


B. PROQUEST RESEARCH LIBRARY (PERIODICAL ARTICLES)
PROQUEST RESEARCH LIBRARY contains many full text literary journals. ProQuest literary journals include:

- American Literature
- Canadian Literature
- Children’s Literature
- College Literature
- Comparative Literature
- Contemporary Literature
- Early American Literature
- Journal of Biblical Literature
- Journal of Modern Literature
- Literature/Film Quarterly
- Twentieth Century Literature
- World Literature Today

C. CREDO REFERENCE (ELECTRONIC REFERENCE BOOKS)


D. GALE VIRTUAL REFERENCE LIBRARY


E. OXFORD DIGITAL REFERENCE SHELF


F. ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA ONLINE

Encyclopedia Britannica Online – Good general encyclopedia containing literary material.

G. OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY – A CORNERSTONE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

600,000 words, 3 million quotations, over 1000 years of English

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is widely regarded as the accepted authority on the English language. It is an unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of 600,000 words—past and present—from across the English-speaking world. As a historical dictionary, the OED is very different from those of current English, in which the focus is on present-day meanings. You’ll still find these in the OED, but you’ll also find the history of individual words, and of the language—traced through 3 million quotations, from classic literature and specialist periodicals to films scripts and cookery books. The OED started life more than 150 years ago. Today, the dictionary is in the process of its first major revision. Updates revise and extend the OED at regular intervals, each time subtly adjusting our image of the English language.

H. SIRS RENAISSANCE (SELECTED PERIODICAL ARTICLES)

SIRS RENAISSANCE (one of three SIRS databases) is a humanities-oriented resource that includes full-text published articles on authors and literature. Type your author or term in the blank to retrieve articles. Try subject headings first to see if your author is listed.

IV. ONEVU: DISCOVER BOOKS, EBOOKS, PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Many works of literary history, criticism, biography, etc. are available in the library’s book collection, accessible by the OneVU discovery tool available on the library’s website. OneVU also allows you to search a large variety of databases to locate resources such as periodical articles, ebooks, videos, and books from the library’s print collection.
From the search menu, select **Shake LRC** to search for books and physical library items, Vincennes University to expand your search to include online articles, and Libraries Worldwide to find items outside Vincennes University (available for Interlibrary Loan). Search for authors, literary works and periods, and find items containing terms such as **realism**, **postmodernism**, etc.

![Search Menu Screenshot](image)

V. PRINT REFERENCE BOOK COLLECTIONS

Besides using books and articles, some of your most important resources are to be found in the VU Library's Reference Collection. Even if there is no book listed in the library's circulating collection about a particular topic—especially an obscure one—you might locate a great deal of material in reference books. **Ask a librarian for assistance.**

A. CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS/OTHER GALE RESEARCH CO. SOURCES: A GOOD STARTING POINT

Gale Research Co. publishes several major cross-indexed literary research reference sources. Of these, VU owns the following, which are comprehensive, multi-volume sets found in the **Reference Collection**. These are being replaced by the online version, **Literature Resource Center** (see above), but the print editions may be useful at times.

- *Contemporary Authors* (Ref. 928.1 C761c) – Biographical.
- *Contemporary Authors. New Revision Series* (Ref. 928.1 E93c) – Biographical, more up to date.
- *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (Ref. 809 R573c) – Reprints of published critical articles.
- *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (Ref. 809 G151t) – Reprints of published critical articles.
- *Nineteenth-Century Literary Criticism* (Ref. 809 H314n) – Reprints of published critical articles.

**How to Use These:** The above sets are cross-indexed with one another, with indexes found in the back of many of the books. A good approach is to find the paperback **Cumulative Index** (Ref. 928.1 C761c) to *Contemporary Authors* and look up your author (all the above except the Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism, which has its own index, are found in this). Refer to the table of abbreviations in the front of the index to find out which reference set your author is listed in. Note VU does not have all the Gale reference sets listed, so look for those mentioned above.

B. ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL ESSAYS

For a definitive, often lengthy essay about an author and her or his place in literature, try the literary biographies in one of the following reference sets:

- *African American Writers* (Ref. 810.9 A258a)
- *American Writers* (Ref. 928 U57a)
- *Ancient Writers: Greece and Rome* (Ref. 880.09 A541)
- *British Writers* (Ref. 928.2 S426b)
- *European Writers* (Ref. 809 E89e)
- *Major Authors and Illustrators for Children and Young Adults* (Ref. 928 M234m)
- *Modern American Women Writers* (Ref. 810.9 M689m)
- *Science Fiction Writers* (Ref. 823 S416s)
In a special category is the multi-volume Dictionary of Literary Biography (Ref. 810.9 D554). This massive work of scholarship provides essays and references to different literary topics such as the following selected examples (VU has many others):

Afro American Fiction Writers After 1955
Afro American Writers After 1955
American Colonial Writers 1606-1734
American Novelists Since World War II
American Short Story Writers 1880-1910
American Writers in Paris 1920-1939
Beats: Literary Bohemians in Postwar America
Twentieth Century American Science Fiction

C. PLOT SUMMARIES, SHORT CRITICAL ANALYSES
Other reference works provide plot summaries and short critical analyses of specific works or several works by an author, as do the following:

Beacham's Popular Fiction in America (Ref. 809.3 P831b)
Critical Survey of Long Fiction (Ref. 809.3 M194c)
Magill's Literary Annual (Ref. 809.04 M194m)
Masterplots (Ref. 809 M423m)
Masterplots II. African American Literature Series (Ref. 810.9 M423a)
Masterplots II. American Fiction Series (Ref. 809.3 M423a)
Masterplots II. British and Commonwealth Fiction Series (Ref. 823.009 M423)
Masterplots. European Fiction Series (Ref. 823.00994 M423)
The Nobel Prize Winners: Literature (Ref. 809.04 N751)
Popular World Fiction: 1900-Present (Ref. 809.3 P831p)
Survey of Contemporary Literature (Ref. 809 M194s)
Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature (Ref. 809 M194su)
Critical Survey of Short Fiction (Ref. 809.31 M194c)

D. ADDITIONAL REPRINTS/EXCERPTS OF CRITICAL ARTICLES
The New Moulton's Library of Literary Criticism (Ref. 820.9 B655n)
Short Story Criticism: Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of Short Fiction Writers (Ref. 809.31 S559)
Twentieth-Century American Literature (Ref. 810.9 B655t)
Twentieth-Century British Literature (Ref. 820.9 T286t)

E. POETRY ANALYSIS
Many of the above literary sources contain references to poets and poetry; the following are of special interest.

The Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry (Ref. 809.81 G758i)
Contemporary Poets (Ref. 809.1 V788c)
Critical Survey of Poetry. English Language Series (Ref. 821 M194c)
Critical Survey of Poetry. Foreign Language Series (Ref. 809.1 M194)
Guide to American Poetry Explication (Ref. 811.009 G946g)
Masterplots II. Poetry Series (Ref. 809.1 M423m)
The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Ref. 809.1 E56e)
Poetry Criticism (Ref. 809.13 P745p)

F. DRAMA REFERENCES
Many of the sources listed above contain a great deal of information about dramatists and plays. However, there are many specialized theatre references.

Critical Survey of Drama: English Language Series (Ref. 822 C934c)
Critical Survey of Drama: Foreign Language Series (Ref. 809.2 M194)
The Crown Guide to the World's Great Plays: From Ancient Greece to Modern Times (Ref. 809.2 S557g)
Masterplots II. Drama Series (Ref. 809.204 M423m)
New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: Index, 1940-1960 (Ref. 792 N532n)

Biographical and Ready Reference
The Biographical Encyclopaedia & Who’s Who of the American Theatre (Ref. 792 R567b)
The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre (Ref. 792 C178c)
The Encyclopedia of the American Theatre: 1900-1975 (Ref. 792.0973 B869)
The Facts on File Dictionary of the Theatre (Ref. 792.03 F142f)
McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama (Ref. 809.2 M147m)
Notable Women in the American Theatre (Ref. 792.082 N899n)
The Oxford Companion to American Theatre (Ref. 792 B727o)
The Oxford Companion to the Theatre (Ref. 792 H333o)
Who's Who in the Theatre (Ref. 792.028 H536w)

Shakespeare References
Companion to Shakespeare (Ref. 822.33 S527cs)
Oxford Companion to Shakespeare (Ref. 822.33 O98s)
The Reader’s Encyclopedia of Shakespeare (Ref. 822.33 C189r)
Rough Guide to Shakespeare: The Plays, the Poems, the Life (Ref. 822.33 D554r)
Shakespeare A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Plays, His Poems, His Life and Times, and More (Ref. 822.33 B789s)
Shakespeare for Dummies (Ref. 822.33 S527d)
Shakespeare Said It (Ref. 822.33 L677s)
Shakespeare’s Sonnets: Critical Essays (Ref. 822.33 S527so)
Shakespeare’s World and Work: An Encyclopedia for Students (Ref. 822.3 S527s)
William Shakespeare (Ref. 822.33 S527h)
William Shakespeare: His World, His Work, His Influence (Ref. 822.33 S527h)

Miscellaneous
American Theatre History. Bibliography (Ref. 792.0973 T246a)
Dramatists Sourcebook. Directory (Ref. 792.02 D763d)
Guide to Play Selection (Ref. 822.008 N655g)
Ottemiller’s Index to Plays in Collections (Ref. 808.82 091i)
Play Index (Ref. 808.82 P722p)

G. SHORT STORY ANALYSIS
Although many of the works mentioned above will have information about short story writers, the following reference books focus in this area of literary research.

American Short Story Writers, 1880-1910 (Ref. 810.9 D554)
American Short Story Writers, 1910-1945 (Ref. 810.9 D554)
American Short Story Writers before 1880 (Ref. 810.9 D554)
American Short Story Writers Since World War II (Ref. 810.9 D554)
Critical Survey of Short Fiction (809.31 M194c)
Masterplots II: Short Story Series (Ref. 809.31 M423s)
A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (Ref. 813.52 H488r)
A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Herman Melville (Ref. 813.3 M531)
A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Ref. 813.3 H399ne)
A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Mark Twain (Ref. 813.4 T969)
Short Story Criticism: Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of Short Fiction Writers (Ref. 809.31 S559)
Short Story Index (Ref. 808.83 C771s)

H. MISCELLANEOUS LITERARY REFERENCE BOOKS
Benet’s Reader’s Encyclopedia (Ref. 803 B435r)
Benet’s Reader’s Encyclopedia of American Literature (Ref. 810.9 B465b)
The Bloomsbury Guide to Women’s Literature (Ref. 809.9 B655b)
Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase & Fable (Ref. 803 B847d)
Brewer’s Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Phrase and Fable (Ref. 803 B847b)
The Columbia History of the American Novel (Ref. 813.009 C726c)
Classic Cult Fiction (Ref. 809.3 W576c)
Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction (Ref. 809.3 C934c)
The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (Ref. 809.38 E56e)
Genreflecting: A Guide to Reading Interests in Genre Fiction (Ref. 813.009 H531g)
Harlem Renaissance and Beyond (Ref. 810.9 R816h)
Horror Literature (Ref. 808.83 H816h)
The Literary Guide to the Bible (Ref. 809.93522 L775)
Literary Research Guide (Ref. 820.9 H289l)
The New Arthurian Encyclopedia (Ref. 809 N532n)
Now Read on...A Guide to Contemporary Popular Fiction (Ref. 823 N946h)
A Reader’s Guide to the American Novel of Detection (Ref. 813.0872 L138r)
Spy Fiction: A Connoisseur’s Guide (Ref. 809.3 M121s)
10,000 Ideas for Term Papers, Projects, Reports and Speeches (Ref. 808.02 L232t)