Literary criticism records opinions about an author's work. Critics interpret, describe, summarize, or evaluate the literature, and their comments can help you define and express your own views. Literary criticism also often discusses a work's historical context, which may give you better insight into an author's purpose.

Since literary criticism usually examines a particular type of writing or a particular period, you need to ask the following questions before you can make an intelligent selection from the library's resources:

1. Did the author primarily write novels, short stories, drama, or poetry?
2. Where and when did the author live?
3. Did the author write primarily in English?

If you don’t have any prior knowledge about an author, consult a general encyclopedia such as Britannica or World Book to get basic information.

**Portal: Bell Library’s online catalog**

**Books on a single author**

Books about specific authors are listed in the subject section of the library's online catalog under the author's last name. For example:

SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM 1564-1616--CRITICISM AND INTERPRETATION

You might also want to try a WORD search in Portal using your author’s name and the term “criticism.” This will increase the number of titles retrieved, and will include books that discuss several authors, including yours, which is useful if you are comparing your author to others writing in the same genre. See more about books on several authors below.

**Books on several authors**

Literary criticism on more than one author may be listed in several places in the subject catalog. You can look under broad topics such as criticism, fiction, or poetry and find books of criticism listed there. Looking under more specific headings, such as English Literature, American Poetry, or Spanish Literature is often very helpful.

**Electronic Databases**

**Academic Search Premier**

Coverage: Mid-1980s to present
Full Text: Contains many full-text articles.
Description: This multi-disciplinary database includes articles from academic journals and consumer publications (Time, Newsweek, etc.). To limit your results to academic journals only, check the “Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals” box under “Limit your Results” on the search page.

**Humanities Abstracts**

Coverage: 1984 to present
Description: This is an author and subject index to periodical articles about people and subjects in the areas of language and literature, performing arts, philosophy, religion and theology, and archaeology.

**Interplay**

Coverage: 19th century to present
Full Text: No
Description: An index to plays in collections, anthologies, and periodicals. The call numbers cited are those assigned by the Portland State University Library and do not necessarily correspond to the holdings at Bell Library.

**Jstor**

Coverage: Provides full image access to backfiles of core scholarly journals, some of which date back to the 1800s.
Full Image: Yes
Description: Does not include the most recent issues of these journals.
**Literature Resource Center** (includes 3 major databases: Contemporary Authors, Contemporary Literary Criticism Select, and Dictionary of Literary Biography; also offers material from Children’s Literature Review, Short Story Criticism, and many others)

**Coverage:** Authors from every age and literary discipline.

**Full Text:** Yes

**Description:** LRC provides access to biographies, bibliographies, and critical analyses of authors from every age and literary genre. It covers more than 120,000 novelists, poets, essayists, journalists, and other writers, with in-depth coverage of 2,500 of the most-studied authors. The database includes an online “Guide to Conducting Literary Research.”

**Contemporary Authors** provides complete biographical and bibliographic information on more than 120,000 U.S. and international authors, including excerpts from published criticism. Also available in print (Ref Z 1224 C6) with cumulative index to the series.

**Contemporary Literary Criticism Select** collects thousands of essays on contemporary authors, which include biographical and critical information, bibliographies of principle works, and resources for further study. Also available in print (Ref PN 771 .C59).

**Dictionary of Literary Biography** provides thousands of biographical and critical essays on the lives, works, and careers of influential literary figures from all eras and genres.

**MLA International Bibliography**

**Coverage:** 1963 to present

**Full Text:** No

**Description:** Available electronically and in print form. The most comprehensive language and literature index. Provides access to over 3500 books, journals, proceedings, series, working papers, etc. published on literature, modern languages, folklore, and linguistics. Covers English, American, European, Asian, African, and Latin American literature and folklore.

**Project Muse**

**Coverage:** Dates vary according to publication, but generally, coverage is from the 1990s to present.

**Full-text:** Yes

**Description:** Provides access to the full text of many academic journals from the Johns Hopkins University Press, as well as other non-profit scholarly publishers. Includes literature and criticism.

**Web of Science**

**Coverage:** 1993 to present.

**Full Text:** No

**Description:** ISI Web of Science includes Arts & Humanities Citation Index, as well as Social Sciences Citation Index and Science Citation Index. It indexes articles from the world’s leading journals in these areas and is updated weekly. **Note:** The unique feature of this database is the ability to link to each article’s cited references and to records of articles that cite the displayed article. Links to records of related articles are also available. Web of Science can be searched by author, topic, source title (journal name), author address, and by cited work (choose “Cited Ref Search” under “Full Search” mode).

**WorldCat** is another online catalog that can be checked. It is the largest online catalog in the world. It is possible to find out what thousands of libraries in different parts of the world own in the way of books, journals, media, and so on. It is also possible to limit sets of search results to Internet Resources that have been selected for inclusion in this database because of their quality.

**Internet Resources**

**Internet Public Library: Literary Criticism**  [http://www.ipl.org/ref/litcrit/](http://www.ipl.org/ref/litcrit/)

Based at the University of Michigan’s School of Information, the Internet Public Library includes links to Reference materials, Subject Collections, including those in Arts & Humanities, Special Collections, a Reading Room, and Searching Tools. This link is to their Literary Criticism page.

**The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism**  [http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins%5Fguide%5Fto%5Fliterary%5Ftheory/](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins%5Fguide%5Fto%5Fliterary%5Ftheory/)

This full-text searchable database provides articles on individual critics and theorists, critical and theoretical schools and movements, and more. Each entry includes a selective primary and secondary bibliography.

**Librarians’ Index to the Internet**  [http://lii.org](http://lii.org)

LII, a project of the Library of California, is a searchable, annotated subject guide to thousands of Internet resources selected and evaluated by librarians. Hosting is provided by the UC Berkeley SunSITE.

**Literary Resources on the Net**  [http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/](http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/)

A searchable collection of links to sites on the Internet dealing with English and American literature, limited to information useful to academics. Maintained by Jack Lynch at Rutgers.
LitLinks <http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/litlinks/> 
This site from Bedford St. Martin’s categorizes information by genre (poetry, drama, fiction, essays and critical theory). Information arranged by chronological list of literary periods or alphabetical author links. Author information includes a biography and any relevant Internet links about the author, specific works and cultural/historical influences. Also includes a "research room", a collection of research aids useful for students, instructors, and writers.

Print Resources

INDEXES

Essay and General Literature Index
Coverage: 1985 to present
Full Text: No
Description: This is an author and subject index to collections of essays found in books. A source of biographical, critical, and bibliographical information in the over 600 books which are indexed each year. The library does not own all of the books indexed here, so check Portal, the online catalog, to see which titles Bell Library owns.

Hispanic American Periodicals Index (HAPI) (Ref Z 1605 .H16)
Author/subject index to documents, reviews, bibliographies, original literary works, and other items appearing in nearly 250 journals published throughout the world which regularly contain information on Latin America. Included are journals in all major disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Subject headings are selected from HAPI Thesaurus and Name Authority (Ref Z 1605 .H162 V33) based on Library of Congress subject headings. Book reviews are listed in a separate section under the author's name.

CHECKLISTS

A checklist is a listing of criticism from various sources. Most checklists are restricted to a particular genre or type of writing (e.g. short stories, novels, drama, poetry) and are limited to a specific time period. In a checklist, a common arrangement is alphabetical by author. Under each author's name is found titles of works by him/her for which criticisms are given. Sometimes in order to get the full title information on the source you need, you must refer to the listing (bibliography) in the back of the book. Examples of checklists are:

Twentieth Century Short Story Explication: Interpretations...of Short Fiction Since 1800 (Ref Z 5917 .S5 W33 + several supplements or updates), by Warren S. Walker.

The Contemporary Novel, a Checklist of Critical Literature on the British and American Novel Since 1945 (Ref Z 1231 F4 A34), by Irving Adelman and Rita Dworkin.


World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh (Main Coll.-PN 2101 .N55 1976), by A. Nicoll.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS


Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century (Ref PN 771 .E5 1999) 4 volumes. This set has brief biographical information on a large number of authors from all over the world. There is an index in volume 4.

OTHER PRINT RESOURCES

Critical Survey of Short Fiction (Ref PN 3321 .C7)

Critical Survey of Long Fiction (Ref PR 821 .C7 1991)


Critical Survey of Drama (Ref PR 623 .C75 1985)
The above four works contain short, critical examinations of selected authors, including lists of major works, biographical sketches, and evaluative essays of the writers' works. They are good starting points for concise overviews.

Old and Middle English Literature - Vol. 146 (Ref PR 166 .O43 1994)
British Prose Writers of the Early Seventeenth Century - Vol. 151 (Ref PR 769 .B75 1995)


Twentieth Century Literary Criticism (Ref PN 771 .G27) For 20th century deceased authors. This multi-volume set contains excerpts of criticism from books, magazines, literary reviews, and scholarly journals. They provide a collection of diverse, sometimes opposing opinions about an author's work. Since the set is continually updated, it may include new criticism on previously listed authors. Look at the last volume in the set for a complete index to all volumes.

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (Ref PN 761 .N56)

Hispanic Literature Criticism (Ref PQ 7081 .A1H573)

Shakespearean Criticism (Ref PR 2965 .S44)

Short Story Criticism (Ref PN 3373 .S386)

Handbook of Latin American Studies (Ref Z 1605 .H26) Extensive, annotated bibliography of material relating to Latin America, prepared by scholars. Now divided into two sections--humanities and social sciences--published in alternate years. Each volume contains special articles on particular phases of life and culture or inter-American relations.


Catalog of the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection (Ref Z 1610 .T48) Listing of materials in this outstanding special collection at the University of Texas-Austin.

For More Information

Contact Sue Willman, Reference/Information Literacy Librarian, English Liaison, at (361) 825-5905 or Susan.Willman@tamucc.edu

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