Effective Resources and References for Organized and Rewarding Scholarship

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### Disclaimer and Acknowledgements

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### M.A. in Literature Learning Outcomes

1. Knowledge of the major historical and literary periods/genres, and their representative authors and works, in British, American, or World literature
2. Ability to analyze literature showing clear engagement with primary texts and in-depth textual analysis
3. Ability to find, comprehend, and apply appropriate theoretical, historical, and cultural scholarship to literary texts
4. Ability to write a thesis-driven academic argument using a professional level of clear and persuasive prose
Graduate Students show up at Cal Poly Pomona with a diverse range of knowledge and experience. As a result, it is difficult to determine what skills you already possess. Whereas the bulk of this guide will help you navigate the types of assignments you will face in graduate school here, this section is to lay out some assumptions faculty will make about your understanding of the discipline. These assumptions should not be read as a litmus test for your success. This is an educational process, and your professors are here to help you navigate this material. If any of the claims made in this section seem foreign to you, ask. One of the many strengths of our department is the accessibility and helpfulness of the faculty.

That said, here are the things with which you should already be familiar.

**Reading**

Reading should be something you actively engage rather than passively absorb. Graduate faculty will expect you to interact with the text in meaningful and productive ways. In other words, think about the book before you get to class.

**...for plot**

Instead of thinking about “what happened,” think about “why it was narrated *in this manner*.” New Critics called this the difference between *story* and *plot*: *story* was the unfiltered chain of events in linear, chronological sequence, but *plot* is how the story is told. Pay attention to the difference.

**...for character**

Young readers tend to read characters in terms of whether they relate to them or not. There is nothing wrong with this, of course, but advanced readers don’t stop there; they explore character’s cultural and psychological motivations.

**...for theme**

Reading for theme is a targeted reading practice that can help organize disparate elements of a text. Advanced readers pick up on these themes early and trace their repetitions, re-articulations, and ramifications throughout the piece.

**Analyzing**

You should know the basic elements of writing a thesis, using library resources to find research (*NOT* google searches), and making analytical claims about a text rather than expressing a simple opinion or pointing out the obvious, and using textual evidence to support your claims.

**Writing**

Graduate students are expected to write clear, lucid prose as free from errors as humanly possible. This means multiple revisions, copy edits, consistency. For examples of important stylistic conventions in academic writing, see the the end of this guide.

**Professionalism**

Professionalism is a marker of maturity, not age. Compose emails with appropriate subject headings and formal/semi-formal cover letters (samples available in this guide), use a professional (CPP) email address, and act respectfully toward your peers. This also includes attendance. Missing a graduate class that only meets once a week is a big deal. Packing up your bag before you’ve been dismissed is rude. And sitting silently through 4 hours of class is boring for you and a hindrance to your learning.
When undergraduates set out to write a paper, they are assignment-oriented. They ask questions about how many sources they need, how many pages are required, and they view those as benchmarks for their success: “if I reach 8 pages and 5 sources, I’ll definitely get a C.” In an effort to bump that C to a B, they write papers about the topics they think their professors want to read. They use $10 words (inappropriately) to sound smart, and write long sentences they think are complex, but are actually just confusing fragments and run-ons. The reason for all this is that their motivation is external: the approval of the professor in the form of the grade.

Graduate students, however, write papers to explore their own ideas. They take interest and (gasp!) pride in their ideas, because those ideas say something about who they are as scholars. This is reflected on multiple levels. Graduate students:

- ... don’t stop at five sources; they find as many sources as necessary to make the strongest argument (more on this in the “Research” section);
- ... revise their work copiously because they are invested in the clarity of their ideas;
- ... recognize the difference between creative and academic writing. Where undergraduates try to surprise their reader with a climactic argument at the end of their paper as if they’re telling a story, graduates foreground their arguments in the first paragraph and use the paper to prove their points.
- ... self-evaluate their work because they have an internal sense of where the argument should be;
- ... always seek help. They recognize the more eyes you put on a paper the stronger it will be, and they are prepared to be challenged if it means strengthening their work.
Some students feel that the purpose of research is either to prove they’ve done the work or to find someone who agrees with them. They ostensibly seek out research in which the scholar makes the same argument they do because they feel that this validates their work, proving they’ve “made the right argument.”

Other students, however, recognize research operates as scaffolding in the construction of their own unique argument. The question “Is my argument right?” is replaced by “Is my argument well supported and productive?” This is where research comes in: to support our readings of the work in question. There are often symptoms that are evident in writing that indicate a misuse or misunderstanding of the role of research in the Graduate paper. These include:

1. An over-reliance on quoted/paraphrased research that spatially dominates the text in a paragraph. This can be a large block quotation that isn’t integrated into one’s own language, a lot of cited information, or the repetition of the same point from different critics.

2. Paragraphs tend to begin and end with another scholar’s words. Professional writers rarely begin or end paragraphs with quotations or paraphrases, instead making sure that their own scholarly voice is the most prominent voice in the paper. This is true of the best graduate students as well.

3. Beyond the symptoms within the writing, this logic manifests in the type of research a student conducts. Graduate students use secondary criticism as a way to engage or generate a conversation rooted in their own sense of voice.

With a better understanding of the conversation, graduate students make more nuanced claims. Where an undergraduate might use platitudes like “women have long sought equal rights in America” and generalizations like “All women were asked to be housewives in the 1950s,” graduate students seek out research to support and nuance these claims. Graduate students establish the context for their paper more concretely:

As America’s postwar economy boomed, suburban homes became prolific and cheap and interstate highway access allowed for a new commuter class to develop. More and more Americans “shifted their allegiances from the old ethnic ties to the new nuclear family ideal” (May 28).

Here the author isn’t making generalizations about women’s role in 1950s America, nor is the author giving their impression about what it must have been like, but rather providing a concrete and robust historical context. These details not only provide a richer sense of the history but also implicitly shape a narrative about why women had a particular role (suburbanization, etc.) and nuance the type of role women actually had. They are not just “housewives” (nor “just” housewives—a valuable profession in and of itself); instead, the very concept of the family is changing, and women’s roles are changing as well.
THINGS ALL GOOD LITERARY SCHOLARS SHOULD KNOW

LITERARY FALLACIES

1. The author is neither the narrator nor the protagonist, no matter how much autobiographical overlap there may be. Similarly, the story (what happened) is not the same as the plot (how we tell the story). There are important reasons for these differentiations.

2. Guessing the author’s intentions is not a valid subject of study. Literary scholars are interested in what we can pull out from a text more than what was poured into it. We call this the “Intentional Fallacy.” In particular, we have to stop making the claim that the author did something to “connect with the reader” …

3. Short of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, you can’t know what the reader thinks when reading a text. Guessing the reader’s response is insufficient grounds for an argument, and is called the “Affective Fallacy.”

4. Literary criticism will always bear the marks of our own ideas, but our opinion about a text, character, or theme should be buried under mountains of textual evidence that make our ideas into objective statements that are evident in the text, not our own minds. We don’t say: “I didn’t like Jack because he wasn’t believable.” We say: “Jack is an unbelievable character because he lacks empathy toward other human beings.”

5. History is not an excuse for racism, sexism, homophobia, and the like. To claim a writer was “a product of their time” draws a dividing line between an evil past and an enlightened present. But racism and the like still exist today; there is no clear line. Saying a writer was a product suggests they had no ability to make decisions for themselves.

PRACTICES OF CRITICISM

1. Never make totalizing claims about a novel. There is no ONE reading of a text, and we can never know a character’s “True identity.” We never claim to know the “authentic” character, or what love “really” is, and we never try to say that a text only does one thing.

2. Categories are useful organizational tools, but they are also straightjackets. To categorize something as “feminist” implies that there are no other ways of reading the text—that it is ONLY a feminist text. Literary critics use these categories to help make comparisons and talk about how a text plays with expectations; they do NOT use categories as a “final answer” about a text.

3. Have the courage to say something that isn’t directly stated in the text. Anyone can say what happened in a story—this is just summary. Instead, we ask the questions of how and why to find out what is significant about our reading. We don’t say: “Gatsby desires money to woo Daisy.” We do say: “Gatsby’s failed romance demonstrates the inaccessibility of the American Dream.”

4. My writing is a reflection of my professionalism. Using colloquialisms, informal language, poor citations and formatting, and misspelling the authors’ names are signs that I am not serious about my work.
CONSTRUCTING A THESIS

A literary scholar analyzes a work of literature to generate “a particular interpretation or formulation of the essential features” of a work of literature. Analysis requires making an arguable and interesting statement about a text. We call this statement a claim, and it must state something 1) not every reader will immediately agree with (arguable), and 2) not something most readers will see in the text (interesting). For instance, a claim might say something like:

**Thesis A:**
The questionable ethics of Nick Carraway in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* undermines the desirability of Jay Gatsby’s nostalgia.

**Thesis B:**
I will explore Jay Gatsby’s nostalgia in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* through Nick Carraway’s behaviors.

In thesis A, you’ll notice that there are three significant textual elements: 1) a characteristic of Nick (“questionable ethics”), 2) a characteristic of Gatsby (“nostalgia”), and 3) a compelling relationship between them (undermined desirability). Compare this to Thesis B in which we have a topic (“nostalgia”), but no clear relationship (an “exploration”) and no sense of how this exploration will be conducted (Nick’s “behaviors”).

You’ll also notice that Thesis A is arguable; this is not the only way to read Nick’s character. We could also argue Nick undermines Gatsby’s nostalgia because of his economic motives rather than his questionable ethics. We could argue that Nick is no better than Gatsby when it comes to nostalgia, and it’s the feminism of Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker that reveals this, like in Thesis C. Conversely, Thesis B is not arguable, because no statement is being made about Gatsby’s nostalgia; you can’t argue with an exploration.

**Thesis C:**
Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby’s nostalgia for a romanticized dream is undermined by Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker’s “New Womanhood.”

<Note: “New Woman” refers to a late-19th and early-20th C. feminist ideal.>

And finally, we can say that Thesis A and Thesis C are both interesting. They ask us to look at the novel against the grain. No character in the novel can be quoted as saying anything similar to these claims. You may find references to dreams and nostalgia on Sparknotes.com, but you won’t find these readings there.
Once you’ve established a compelling relationship between two narrow textual elements, then we can begin to consider the most important element of the thesis: its significance. The best literary scholars don’t just say interesting things about books, they say interesting things about the world. But unlike financial analysts whose theses promise tangible monetary gain as their significance, literary scholars revise history, promote social justice, rethink the strategies and functions of literature, and offer productive alternatives to the way we view the world. And this needs to be conveyed in the thesis.

**Thesis A (revision):**
By looking at how Nick Carraway’s questionable ethics undermines the desirability of Jay Gatsby’s nostalgia, Fitzgerald’s novel reveals the paradox of the American dream that looks both to the future and the past.

**Thesis C (revision):**
Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby’s nostalgia for a romanticized dream is undermined by Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker’s “New Womanhood,” which underscores the serious threat feminism posed to patriarchal narratives in the early 20th C.

In both of these revisions, the significance statement reaches out beyond the text to think in terms of history, whether to challenge our traditional myth of the American dream or to highlight a historical gender bias. In the context of an undergraduate course, such claims are perfectly legitimate and arguable. They will require some research, but we’ll get to that shortly.

**NOTE: Against Theme- and Symbol-Hunting**
In high school you may have been taught to go hunting for themes or symbols in a text. The result of the former was a claim that looks like this:

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* shows the theme of alienation.

Such thematic claims are invariably uninteresting, though, as they don’t say anything worthwhile about the uniqueness or function of the theme. Why, in this example, does Fitzgerald show alienation? Might it be contrasted with some other mode (and thus establish a relationship)? What literary strategies does he use to show alienation, and how is that different from other authors and texts? In other words, finding a theme is not an end in and of itself, but it can be a productive foundation for stronger claims.

Symbols are a bit trickier:

The raft in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* symbolizes freedom.

Here it seems like we have a relationship between two textual elements: the raft and freedom. It would seem to be arguable because the raft could symbolize something else (transience, deception, homosocial bonds). But it wouldn’t be interesting, since the novel is ostensibly about freeing Jim from slavery. Even if the raft symbolized something less obvious (like homosocial bonds), it would still remain a weak claim. The reason is that symbols are often used to create simple pairings—see a raft, see freedom—and such simplifications are frowned upon. A stronger symbol-based claim might be this:

The raft in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* symbolizes an alternative form of civilization free of racism.

The difference here is that the point of the claim isn’t to say “Ooo, look! I found a symbol!” Instead, it’s a statement about a relationship between the space of the raft and the (implied) pre-Civil War South from which Huck and Jim flee. The emphasis is on the characteristics of the alternative form of civilization.
Original
By contextualizing Keats’s developing ideas regarding the role of the poetic voice in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, I suggest an alternative reading of Keats’s poem focusing on the cultural moment in which it was written and take into consideration the metaphysical, moral, and imaginative tendencies inherent in the text. In tracing Keats’ ideological notions back to their historical period, representations of the poet’s philosophical inquiries are more fully elucidated.

Revision
By contextualizing Keats’s *The Eve of St. Agnes* within his evolving ideas about poetic voice toward “negative capability,” I propose an alternative reading of the moral dimension of imagination in 19th C. British romantic poetry.

Original
I argue that the lack of agency exhibited by the female characters in Jess Walter’s *The Zero* highlights the restrictions placed on gender when dealing with trauma, as well as in finding their role in the “collective identity” within the “homeland” state. This forces women to respond to trauma mimoetically, which is problematic in understanding how the female gender operates within the new “homeland” state.

Revision
The surveillance of women in Jess Walter’s *The Zero* pressures women to respond to traumas like 9/11 in prescribed ways, denying them the opportunity to participate fully in the construction of the nation’s collective identity.

Additional Thesis Samples

While other scholars have acknowledged that Esther in Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* disassociates her inner and outer “selves,” I argue this discontinuity exists because of her hyperawareness of her own performativity of gender. As such, Esther can be reinterpreted not as mentally disturbed, but as a savvy women who was able to see the social constraints placed on her identity, a vision that ultimately drove her mad.

Notice how the author situates herself in a conversation already taking place (“While other scholars...”), which shows the thesis is arguable. Notice the clear relationship (hyperawareness) established between two elements (disassociated selves and performed gender roles). Notice a clearly stated significance.

Although some have argued that Black Elk’s voice in *Black Elk Speaks* has been taken over by his translator, John G. Neihardt, and Western textual traditions, Black Elk’s distinct ecological vision and indigenous agency nonetheless remains and affirms the mutual dependency of man and earth.

Again notice how the author finds herself entering a conversation. Notice the signs of “close reading”: this will recover one voice from under another, more obvious voice. It is specific in the types of textual details it will look for (ecological visions, indigenous agency). The implied significance of this study is that it settles a controversy over voice in a productive way.
**WRITING AN INTRODUCTION**

The introduction is perhaps the most important element of the paper because it sets the tone and structure for everything that follows. If we lose our reader in the first paragraph, it’s much harder to get them back. Spend time shaping this paragraph, and when you finish your paper, come back and revise it.

**TITLING YOUR PAPER**

Titles matter. It is the first thing our reader will see and the first clue we give them about content. Your title should be descriptive and relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Uncovering Coveralls: The Hidden Agenda of America’s Misnamed Fashion Item.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Farcical Aquatic Ceremonies: A Sound Foundation for Governance”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WRITING AN INTRODUCTION FROM A THESIS**

If the thesis introduces the paper’s argument and significance, then the introduction introduces the thesis. Your thesis already gives you all the terms you need to write a strong introduction. You have at least two operant elements and a compelling relationship between them. Highlight them. Use the introduction to prepare your reader for those terms. The introduction often (but not always) includes:

- references to the discourse you’re entering (“Other scholars argue...”),
- narrowed definitions for major keywords (nostalgia, trauma),
- appropriate textual details: not a plot summary, but crucial, relevant details like the names/relationships/conflicts of characters you reference in the thesis,
- historical or theoretical context, if applicable to your argument

Take an example:

**Thesis C (revision):**

Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby’s nostalgia for a romanticized dream is undermined by Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker’s “New Womanhood,” which underscores the serious threat feminism posed to patriarchal narratives in the early 20th C.

An appropriate introduction for this thesis might begin by defining and contextualizing the patriarchal narratives of the early 20th C. Presumably, these are tied to romanticized dreams, and perhaps the literary Romantic movement of the 19th C. We would certainly need to define “New Womanhood.” And as for appropriate textual details, there’s no reason to get bogged down in details yet; but we should introduce Nick as the narrator and Gatsby as the object of his story, and we should do so through their mutual nostalgia (at this stage of your paper, no one cares how Gatsby got his money, or who killed him, etc.). Similarly, we might add a sentence about the feminist counternarrative posed by Daisy and Jordan, all this before we finally state our thesis.

**Failable Introductions:**

1. **Dictionary definition:** “Webster’s Dictionary defines wit as....” Defining your terms is important, but the first line is not the place, and the dictionary is not specific enough for our discourse.
2. **Vague Platitudes:** “Since the dawn of time...” These generalizations say nothing about your argument. It is something naive scholars do to give importance to their ideas, but actually has the opposite effect, showing that the writer actually has little clue about the significance of their statement.
DEFINING YOUR TERMS

A common critique of scholarship is a failure to define one’s terms, and this is true whether you’re a student or a professor. The difference is that students take this to mean they need to quote the dictionary. But professors recognize that a term can be interpreted in myriad ways: that the term belongs to its own discourse. Dictionaries provide generic definitions that don’t actually help us to situate the term in a particular time and place. Instead, you need to define the term contextually. For instance:

In this OED entry, we are given a sense that “identity” is something permanent and unchangeable. And more than that, it implies that the definition is stable and permanent. But read this entry from the Keywords for American Cultural Studies on “Identity.”

In this entry, Carla Kaplan (a scholar in a peer-reviewed, discipline-specific anthology) shows us the nuances of this term, defamiliarizing it from our common “dictionary” usage, and invites us to think of the term as far more complex and relational.

The first paragraph alone differentiates between “personal identity” and “social identity,” while the second paragraph actually critiques the Oxford English Dictionary definition.

When scholars are asked to “define their terms,” what they’re really being asked to do is to nuance their understanding of the term within a particular discourse. To do that, you’ll need to read scholarship in the discourse. And to do that, you’ll need to know how to research.
CONDUCTING RESEARCH

All papers are research papers in some capacity. Whether you are asked to find evidence within the primary text or external sources, we can’t make effective arguments about the world without consulting the world. But when we say you must write a “research paper,” what do we mean by research? Research is not about finding someone else who has made the argument you want to make and then agreeing with them. The goal of research is to **contribute to the field of knowledge**. To do that, you need to know what’s already been said so you can enter the conversation. So where do you go to find out what’s being said?

Research is not conducting a Google search, skimming Wikipedia, or finding a dictionary definition of some keyword. These are great places to start your work, but unacceptable destinations. Better places to start are high-caliber forums like the *LA Review of Books*. Even better places to start are discourse-specific introductions like:

- *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* by Burgett and Hendler;
- *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin;
- *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online);
- *The Ecocriticism Reader* by Glotfelty;
- *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* by Caruth.

These discourse-specific encyclopedias, introductions, and anthologies are **scholarly sources**; that is, they have been reviewed by scholars in the field and deemed appropriate contributions to the conversation. These are also a starting point for beginning your research. You can trust them to make reliably arguable statements within the field of literary studies. To engage these texts is to engage how a term like trauma is more than just a psychological diagnosis in the DSM V, but rather has a history, a philosophy, and a literary articulation. You won’t get this from the psychology database you searched because that database is collating sources from a completely different discourse. Start your research with these sources, then use the bibliographies provided to find more specific information.
SELECTING APPROPRIATE KEYWORDS

Different terms yield different results, and it is your job to find the best terms possible. This is, in large part, educated guesswork. Let’s say your argument is about how gender is constructed in post-9/11 America. Aside from needing to narrow down this topic (see the section above), you won’t just be searching “gender” and “9/11.” You’ll also search terms like “female,” “masculinity,” “family,” “domesticity,” and the other keywords you’ve generated from narrowing the topic. Check out this resource about keyword selection: <http://libguides.marquette.edu/content.php?pid=219342&sid=1822303>.

HOW TO GO FROM ONE SOURCE TO TEN IN ONE EASY STEP

As soon as you’ve identified one or two sources, the first thing you do is SKIM THE WORKS CITED PAGE. If one person has already written on gender after 9/11, they’ve already done a bunch of research on the subject. Mine their bibliography for sources and you’ll find yourself participating in the scholarly discourse.

“THERE’S NOTHING WRITTEN ON MY TOPIC!”

As unnerving as it might seem, this means you’ve come up with an idea that hasn’t been discussed yet. Remember that the point of research is to add to our body of knowledge, not recycle it. If no one has written on your author and text, think about it in terms of triangulating your argument through other research. For instance, say you wanted to talk about population control in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Herland, and specifically the theory of eugenics. A simple search of “Gilman AND Herland AND eugenics” yielded nothing. But perhaps “eugenics AND literature” or “history of birth control” or “matriarchal societies” may. In other words, don’t think about research in terms of finding a scholar who has already generated your argument and laid out the facts for you, which you then cite like a statistic or a historical fact. Instead, think about research as evidence from related fields that, through analysis, yields logical claims about your subject.

Databases in Other Disciplines

Interdisciplinary work is the lifeblood of literary scholarship. Few literary scholars commit themselves solely to textual analysis alone. But students often make the mistake of jumping straight to discipline-specific databases like PSYCINFO because they want to talk about schizophrenia or trauma. But that’s like walking into a psychology class and asking the professor to help you with your paper on Hamlet and Ophelia. It’s not that the information is bad, but you’re not a psychologist, and literary characters aren’t real, diagnosable people. While some disciplines are easier to access for English majors (history, for instance), others can be anxiety-provoking (philosophy, cognitive science).

Over time, you can and should familiarize yourself with these other disciplines by taking courses and doing more extensive research. But ultimately you are not trying to be a psychologist, you’re trying to be a literary scholar. Your task is to analyze how psychological concepts operate in literature. As such, use databases appropriate to the field, and as questions arise, start targeting specific questions in other fields, and let this be your entryway into new forms of knowledge.
SAMPLE RESEARCH DIALOGUE

Research is like a conversation. You don’t just ask one question and then sit back and listen. Consider it a back-and-forth, a practice that you continually return to while you write the paper. Below is a sample of how this dialogue might work based on a project I wrote for ENG 500 in Fall 2012.

| **Primary Source:** F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* |
| **Opinion:** Fitzgerald represents trauma differently than other writers. |

**Conduct Research (1)**
Define my terms through research: how is trauma represented? Select keywords like: Trauma; trauma fiction; representations of trauma; trauma and style; trauma aesthetics.

**Analyze Research (1)**
From sources like Anne Whitehead or Laurie Vickroy, I identify the traits common to trauma studies, but evaluate them as different from Fitzgerald’s style. For instance, they focus on memory, but Fitzgerald’s novel doesn’t concern itself with issues of memory (flashbacks, histories, etc.). Unlike other writers of trauma, Fitzgerald doesn’t represent trauma in terms of memory.

**Revised opinion (1)**
Evaluate the relationship between trauma and memory: has this always been the case? Select keywords like: trauma and memory; history of trauma; [recognizing “trauma” is a new term, start searching the terms more appropriate for Fitzgerald’s time period] shell shock; shell shock and memory; shock and memory; Freud and shock; Freud and memory.

**Conduct Research (2)**
From these sources, I see that trauma has not always been defined the same way, and that in Fitzgerald’s time, a very different vision existed for what trauma was and thus how it was represented.

**Analyze Research (2)**
Because Fitzgerald was writing at a different time, he imagined trauma not in terms of memory, as many do today, but in terms of [something else].

**Revised opinion (2)**
If trauma is not represented through memory, then how does Fitzgerald represent trauma? Use keywords like: Fitzgerald and trauma; Fitzgerald and memory; Tender and trauma; Tender and shock; Tender and Freud; Fitzgerald and Freud. [Note that this is the first time you’re looking for secondary criticism on Fitzgerald’s novel, specifically.]

**Conduct Research (3)**
From this scholarship, I see that others have talked about trauma in this novel in terms of distraction or in terms of exhaustion. I agree with these, but think we can also add the notion of isolation. [Note that this is my original contribution. I’m not just agreeing with others, I’m adding something new.]

**Analyze Research (3)**
Because Fitzgerald was writing at a different time, he imagined trauma not in terms of memory, as many do today, but in terms of isolation.

**Revised opinion (3)**
I will argue that Fitzgerald represented trauma in *Tender is the Night* through isolation rather than memory.

**Research Paper Thesis Claim**
Because he was writing at the turn of the century, which is important because it changes how readers understand the protagonist. [Note that the significance statement may remain vague at this stage, but has direction—I’m going to address the impact of this change on perceptions of the protagonist. After working through the text and the research, I will come back to this statement to specify how our understanding of the protagonist has changed.]
ABSTRACTS

An abstract is a brief passage that gives readers a concise snapshot of your paper. It is usually between 250 and 500 words, and may be written before you’ve actually finished the paper. It is usually read in lieu of the paper itself, so it must function independently. In this regard, it is very different from the introduction to your paper. There are three basic components to the abstract. It will
• describe the discourse/conversation you are entering;
• state your original contribution in the form of a thesis statement; and
• elaborate on the specifics of your supporting research and the project’s significance.

The graph to the right represents only one way of writing an abstract. As you will see on the next page, the samples from Gregory Semenza use a three-paragraph model, and are just as successful.

Tips from Jo Koster ([https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/cas/english/AbstractTips.pdf](https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/cas/english/AbstractTips.pdf)):
• The abstract should begin with a clear sense of the research question you have framed... Often this is set up as a problem/solution strategy: “Although some recent scholars claim to have identified Shakespeare’s lost play Cardenio, that attribution is still not accepted. In this paper I use the records of the Worshipful Company of Stationers, London’s chief publishing organization, to show that the play identified by Charles Hamilton in 1990 is not actually the play Shakespeare’s company mounted in 1613.”
• It always helps when you identify the theoretical or methodological school that you are using to approach your question or position yourself within an ongoing debate. This helps readers situate your ideas in the larger conversations of your discipline. For instance, “The debate among Folsom, McGann, and Stallybrass over the notion of database as a genre (PMLA 122.5, Fall 2007) suggests that....” or “Using the definition of dataclouds proposed by Johnson-Eilola (2005), I will argue that...”
Homecoming of the Vietnamese Eurasian in Bach Mai’s Ivory and Opium

Bach Mai in *Ivory and Opium* (1985) adds an economic concern to the cultural and ethnic dimension of Vietnamese texts written in French by questioning the function of the educated racially-mixed individual in the business world. Bach Mai recounts the return of a female French-speaking Eurasian living in Ottawa to her native Southeast Asia. As a journalist, the narrator Michelle embodies the conflict between East and West that is captured in her very racial and cultural hybridity. Hired as a bilingual writer for the making of a documentary on Southeast Asian elephants, Michelle recreates the Vietnamese landscapes of her childhood during her trip through Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar while she becomes the witness of war, violence, poverty, and drug trafficking. Haunted by the memory of her mother and subjected to the double pressures of her native and host cultures, Michelle faces with great difficulties the demands of global capitalism that her trip exposes. Her sudden discovery that the documentary in question is but a mere front for filming the opium caravan in the golden triangle threatens to destroy her fragile sense of self.

*Ivory and Opium* courageously proposes an unusual political and economic criticism of Western interventions in the East by showing how the Vietnamese Canadian narrator Michelle ends up contributing involuntarily to the local corruption that she denounces in Asia. Bach Mai’s text attempts to define what it means to be a biracial female journalist whose responsibility it is, she feels, to raise awareness about the history of the East although she had to leave Asia as a child. *Ivory* ultimately asks whether the narrative that the West constructs of the East behind the eye of the camera when filming can render the self insignificant.

An Abstract Walk-Through

Paragraph one establishes the context for the argument: in a single sentence (the first) it describes the field, identifies a gap, and establishes the topic. After that, the paragraph informs the reader only of the plot details necessary to support the essay author’s claim—put another way, the essay author is framing the story in a particular way that may be different from your own reading. This is already analytical in nature as it is entering a debate, but note that the author has not generated a thesis. That comes later in the paragraph, and does so in a fluid matter. It’s not a single sentence tacked onto the end of the paragraph, but presented as a series of steps the author takes.

1. In sentence 3, the essay author situates *Ivory and Opium* in terms of racial and cultural hybridity (a narrower claim than “education in global capitalism from sentence 1). This is a conscious decision on the part of the author.

2. In sentence 4, the author further specific the topic from hybridity to a concrete textual example in the recreated landscapes. Note here, though, that while the details about Michelle’s travels are novel summary, the idea that she recreates Vietnamese landscapes is the author’s contribution.

3. In sentence 5 we have a more direct statement of the claim: that the character is haunted by the memories brought about by global capitalism. This is not sufficient, though, because we haven’t established the specifics.

4. In sentence 6, we further the claim and show its significance/impact as the annihilation of identity.

Notice the author never repeats herself, but rather advances and clarifies her claim. This process can be viewed as a series of qualifications leading up to and through the claim.

In the same manner, paragraph two elaborates on the argument by breaking down the key terms and their implications for this reading of the novel. It establishes a roadmap for the paper’s arguments and narrates the paper’s scope—that is, the major dynamics the essay author will address. It then concludes with a synthesis of the argument as a whole, and recasts its importance in light of the new details added.
CONDENSING YOUR IDEAS

When writing a word-limited paper (an abstract, or a short paper), write beyond the word count, then condense. You will notice your ideas expand to their full capacity, then by shrinking the language you will make it more rhetorically sound. See that strategy at work below.

[290 Words]

Narrative has historically held a privileged position in trauma studies, from Freudian psychoanalysis to contemporary neuroscience. And over the past twenty years, following scholars like Cathy Caruth and Dominic LaCapra, increasing attention is paid to the role fictional representations of trauma play in this conversation, and the forms used to represent and translate the inner workings of the traumatized mind for others. Yet often these studies limit the category of trauma narratives to those works with a predetermined set of characteristics—fiction that employs images of fractured identities and disjointed, nonlinear narratives. While most literary trauma scholars willingly and unselfconsciously trace the growth of the term “trauma” from its birth in the late-nineteenth century to its codification in the DSM in 1980, they also seemingly take for granted an established rubric of trauma fiction. Put another way, while the term “trauma” clearly evolves, “trauma fiction” remains a stable referent. Yet the strategies that Tim O’Brien used in 1994 to represent the experience of Vietnam are vastly different than the strategies employed by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1936 to describe the trauma of World War I.

I argue that fictional strategies for representing trauma undergo a parallel growth over the twentieth century, and that contemporary trauma scholarship’s emphasis on “fragmentation” is forged in a particular cultural moment—postmodernity—that is distinct from modernist aesthetics that emphasize themes like “alienation.” By historically situating literary trauma studies in the contemporary moment, I articulate an insightful challenge to a prescriptive tendency within literary trauma research and an original reading of Fitzgerald’s novel. As the American Psychological Association revises the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) to its fifth edition, scholars are forced to recognize how our understandings of these conditions evolve.

[200 Words]

Narrative has historically held a privileged position in trauma studies, from Freudian psychoanalysis to contemporary neuroscience. Over the past twenty years [NOTICE HOW UNNECESSARY DETAILS GET DROPPED], increasing attention has been paid to the contribution of fictional representations of trauma, and the forms used to translate the life of the traumatized mind to others. Often, however, these studies use a predetermined set of characteristics to define trauma fiction—fractured identities and nonlinear narrative structure. [THE TWO SENTENCES ARE COMBINED TO ELIMINATE THE REARTICULATION]. While scholars commonly trace the evolution of the term “trauma” over the past 150 years, “trauma fiction” remains a stable referent. Yet Tim O’Brien’s strategies for representing the trauma of Vietnam are vastly different from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s vision of World War I. [HERE THE SENTENCE IS REDUCED FROM 36 WORDS TO 22: REDUNDANT DETAILS LIKE THE TEMPORAL MARKERS ARE UNNECESSARY.]

I argue fictional strategies for representing trauma undergo a parallel growth [“OVER THE TWENTIETH CENTURY” IS REDUNDANT BECAUSE “PARALLEL GROWTH” ALREADY REFERENCES THE TEMPORAL MARKER ABOVE], and that contemporary trauma scholarship’s emphasis on “fragmentation” is forged in a particular cultural moment—postmodernity—distinct from modernist aesthetics that privilege “alienation.” By historically situating literary trauma studies, I challenge a prescriptive tendency within literary trauma research and present an original reading of Fitzgerald’s Tender is the Night. As trauma evolves [I’VE CUT OUT THE REFERENCES TO THE APA AND DSM—THESE DETAILS AREN’T NECESSARY HERE] to respond to a new generation of veterans, reviewing the history of our representations provides insight into the assumptions we make about trauma and its victims.
Short Analysis

A short analysis consists of a focused exploration of one particular aspect of a text. A successful short analysis privileges depth over breadth by focusing, for instance, on a theme, motif, symbol, metaphor, formal characteristics, or structure/form. A short analysis necessarily includes arguments, observations and claims about the text that all aim at uncovering the text’s overall meaning and significance. For that reason, a short analysis can either make use of brief close-readings to ground its exploration further in the text, or consist solely of a close-reading.

Short Analysis Sample: Concrete: A Symbol of Oppression

In his beur novel *Tea in the Harem*, Mehdi Charef uses setting as a shifting signifier that defines the circular and physical nature of economic and ethnic oppression. In his portrait of inner city life in Paris, one image prevails as a symbol with multiple meanings: concrete. Concrete becomes a metaphor that represents both the physical location of the narrative and the characters within the narrative. Specifically, Charef uses concrete to denounce the circular and paradoxical nature of oppression, blurring the lines between perpetrators and victims.

Concrete first functions as a figurative device that describes the entrapping life of the inner city. Charef often refers to Paris as the “Flower City,” an ironic name considering what the city represents to the gang of teenagers raised within its crude concrete buildings and who survive on the city’s inhospitable concrete streets. The concrete will “never leave you. It’s there, like a weight, in your movements, your voice, your eyes, the way you speak…right down to your fingertips” (52). There is little that Majid can do to escape it, though “people have tried everything…alcohol, drugs…It doesn’t go away. It clings to you like a caterpillar on a branch. If you try to choke it, you just end up dead.” Charef’s images of concrete personify economic and racial distinctions as forces that paralyze and haunt the underprivileged members of Majid’s community. To be part of this community, either by birth, immigration, or through personal or economic struggles, means becoming one of the “children of the concrete.” Mobility is almost impossible for members of the inner city. Concrete personifies oppression as a stifling, physical force. Though Parisians consider their Paris the “Flower City,” Majid and his peers see the city as a jail. The “Flower City” belongs to the colonizers; Majid lives in the margins of their world.

Besides personifying concrete as a living force that oppresses, Charef uses concrete as a symbol for Majid’s subculture and for that of his peers, which is here associated with poverty, vices, and despair. When Charef writes, “The concrete doesn’t sing, it screams — howls despair, like wolves in the forest, in the snow without the strength to dig a hole to die in,” the symbol shifts from the colonizer to the colonized. The concrete is no longer a force of oppression, but becomes symbolic of oppression itself: refracted, the concrete becomes the oppressed. The “children of the concrete” are compared to scavengers, “wolves,” howling in despair. Like the wolves dying in the snow, they evoke fear and pity. They are feared because they are the other. As long as they remain pitiful and nonviolent, they evoke pity. The colonizing normative center who created stereotypes by marginalizing the poor and the ethnic others ignore, however, the consequences of what they have created. They do not image or look at the struggling others who “are waiting to see if someone will get them out” (53). Instead, “people give them a wide berth, because they’re scary” (54). Majid and his gang can then be understood as a pack of scavengers, struggling to survive in the face of ethnic prejudice, parental abuse and abandonment, poverty and female objectification. Few make it off the concrete. Seeking escape, economic freedom, or revenge, those who remain tied to the pack become thieves, pimps, junkies, and arsonists.

One might argue that Majid perpetuates his imprisonment to the concrete as he gives up a few opportunities to work and favors the paradoxical freedom of the streets over providing for his family. Either way, the perpetrators of the stereotypes that created “the children of the concrete” become the victims of the institutions they produced. Class and racial boundaries continue to foster each other, poverty juxtaposed to vice and violence continues to thrive, and concrete continues to represent the fragmented city of the colonizers and the colonized alike.
ANOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The cleverly titled “annotated bibliography” is a list of sources that includes citation information and summaries of those citations. There are numerous ways to write an annotation, and its function may differ depending on context, but in my classes I’m looking for something specific. As you engage in a research project, your list of sources will grow very large. It’s hard to keep track of all these sources, which is why free software like Evernote and Mendeley can be really helpful organizing tools, and why annotations are so important.

- First and foremost, the annotation is a targeted summary of the article that serves as a quick reference for yourself when you sit down to write the paper. Rather than having to reread or skim the entire article, the annotation should suffice.
- Second, the annotation is useful for an outside audience to follow along with your research. Faculty haven’t read all the things.Annotations are one way of keeping up with your research, particularly in classes like ENG 500 when students write almost exclusively outside my field. Plus, we like to learn new things and good annotations allow us that luxury.
- Third, annotations require you to make sense of the article. In the hustle and bustle of graduate work, it is easy to read a source and put it down, and never look at it again. But the annotation forces you to reflect on what you’ve read. It aids your learning.

To this end, your annotation must analytically summarize the text. This does not mean to narrate the article point by point (“First she says X, then she says Y, finally she says Z”). You will synthesize the material and put it in your own logically coherent structure. To do that, you must find the thesis, identify the discourse the scholar is entering (which often includes defining their key terms), summarize the arguments, and analyze their effectiveness.

Alexander, Jeffrey. “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma.” Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Ed. Jeffrey Alexander et al. Berkeley: U of California P, 2004. 1-30. Print. Alexander attempts to solidify the term “trauma,” which he argues has been misused in contemporary discourse. He defines cultural trauma as occurring “when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness” (1). The seminal concept that Alexander invokes is the idea that trauma is not defined by an event but it is rather created and defined within a collective, and uses speech act theory to demonstrate his point. [81 words.]

Lewis, Andrea. “Immigrants, Prostitutes, and Chorus Girls: National Identity in the Early Novels of Jean Rhys.” Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies, 6:1 (1999): 82-95. Print. Lewis uses the dueling locations of Anna’s place of birth (a colonized island) and her place of residence (England as a colonizing force) to account for Anna’s transience and inability to belong anywhere. Lewis argues that Anna embodies an attempt at the impossible integration of periphery and center as xenophobic characters such as Ethel effectively shut her out of mainstream English society. Lewis’ postcolonial use of location and fragmented self highlights Anna’s lack of agency by showing that her simultaneous existence in two places strips her of the ability to define herself in any empowering way. [99 words]
Sample Question #1
Females of the post-colonial generation are doubly oppressed: oppressed by both the colonizer and a patriarchal society. Shérazade must navigate such a double oppression in order to define who she is as an Algerian, French, perhaps even hybrid person and as a woman. Unlike Pierrot who is militantly against the oppressive dominant culture, and France who is militantly against the male gaze, Shérazade seems to travel between both extremes in a somewhat random and fluid way, which at times seems purposeful. How does this fluid movement complicate and at the same time help her define who she is?

Sample Question #2, with response
Jess Walter’s The Zero is broken up by narrative gaps. Although focalized through the main protagonist, readers only see a limited perspective of Brian Remy’s actions. What role do the gaps play in developing Remy’s character?

Remy seems to be remembering only the moments in which he acted admirably—meaning the gaps in his memory only represented the times in which he acted deplorably. One way to interpret Remy’s narration, then, is as a way of glossing over his misdeeds: torture, intimidation, adultery, and the like. In turn, it is reasonable that, given the satiric nature of the novel, The Zero caricatures the American response to the War on Terror. While Americans hailed the heroes and victims of 9/11 relentlessly, they also supported (even if just through silence and memory gaps) the harsh measures enacted against suspected terrorists.
There are many resources available online for MLA formatting, but formatting extends beyond your works cited page, including the way page numbers should appear, fonts, images, and so forth. I provide a simplistic outline of the MLA paper format and in-text citation conventions, but for more detailed and nuanced descriptions of these, consult the official MLA Handbook 7th Edition. I do not address end-text citation in any depth. While there are plenty of online resources that are useful in a pinch (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/), they are no substitute for having the official manual. Online citation generators are also useful (easybib, for instance), but require you know what you’re doing in the first place in order to be effective and accurate.

**FORMATTING YOUR PAPER**

MLA conventions include ways that your papers are supposed to appear. These are to be uniform between students and the format is detailed in the Handbook. I have reproduced the relevant information here.

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**Ruler Guides**

Use the ruler guides for indenting paragraphs and bibliographies. Don’t just use the “tab” key. It will save you hours and is the RIGHT way to indent.

For help, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUTMO3bHOGA.

**Paragraph Spacing**

If you use a newer edition of Word, the default setting adds additional space between paragraphs. THIS MUST BE TURNED OFF. Go here to find out how: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMHdw3NX9wQ.

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**A Basic Tutorial on Formatting your Paper**

Other issues like changing the margins, adding a header, as well as the paragraph spacing we’ve identified in the box above can all be found in this helpful 3 minute tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Qf8AfifCcD4
MLA IN-TEXT (PARENTHEtical) CITATIONS

While end-text citation is something you can reference in the Handbook as needed, in-text citation should be memorized because it’s the thing you’ll do most often and will need to do so while you write. The standard format is as follows:

“Professors get miffed when students add extra commas and periods to their parenthetical citations or when they put these parenthetical citations inside the quotation marks” (DeRosa 42).

OR

Aaron DeRosa warns students, “It is redundant to put the author’s last name in the parenthetical citation if you’ve already stated it in the sentence” (56).

You will also need to know that, if the quotation is in the middle of a sentence, the parenthetical reference belongs in front of the nearest punctuation:

DeRosa pays particular attention to “inattentive citers” that ignore citation conventions in his class (“Writing” 4); these citers are students who dismiss the value of citations because they have yet to grasp that citation is “the first sign of professionalism” within a community of scholars (DeRosa, E.R.R.O.R.S. 8).

And finally, you’ll notice in the example above that when you cite two different sources from the same author, you need to identify them by the first significant word in the title. If the author is unclear (as in the second citation), you should include the author’s name as well, followed by a comma.

For more nuances citing interviews, films, editors, and the like, use the MLA Handbook, 7th edition.
SUBMITTING YOUR MATERIALS

To practice your professional communication skills, all formal submissions of assignments should be emailed using a simple cover letter format in the email and an appropriately titled digital file. See the sample below.

The subject line of your email should be descriptive, not dismissive. Headings like “Here you go!” are, obviously, not acceptable.

As for the body of the email, get in the habit of constructing these as you would a submission cover letter. They need not be complex, as you can see.

Digital File Naming
Nothing screams “don’t take me seriously” as much as a file named “Paper” (or worse, “Document 1”).

Include your last name and a brief descriptor. Always start with your last name:

These files must be .doc or .docx format.

Email Address
One way to distinguish yourself as a professional is to foreground your institutional affiliation by using your University-supplied email address. While you can have your mail forwarded to more familiar systems like gmail, your institutional affiliation will give you far more credibility than your high school-created account, “noseminer42294@yahoo.com.”
FORMAL WRITING: A WRITING STYLE GUIDE

(Adapted from the MFS: Modern Fiction Studies manual)

FIRST AND LAST NAMES

When an author or critic is mentioned for the first time in an essay, use the first and last names; thereafter, use the last name only, unless there are two or more authors with the same last name. Where there is a passing reference to someone like Shakespeare or Goethe, there is no need to include a first name. This rule does not apply to character names.

EMPHASIS

MLA strongly discourages the use of italics and scare quotes to draw emphasis to words or phrases. It is used as a crutch so that an author need not explain why they are placing emphasis on a particular phrase. Eliminate these from your writing and allow the language in your sentence to clearly demonstrate the emphasis needed.

BLOCK QUOTATIONS

Set a quote of 70 words or more as a block quote with 1” margins. Always put dialogue or poetry of more than three lines and dialogue in block quote format, regardless of word count:

CAPITALIZATION

Use chapter 2 rather than Chapter Two. Also, preface, introduction, foreword, afterword, etc., are not capitalized (see 3.6.5 in the MLA Handbook for more information). If the title of an essay includes a quotation, other rules apply. When the quotation in the title includes capitalized words, include the words as they appear in the original text; otherwise, capitalize only the first word of the quotation when it begins a title. For example: Tamlyn Monson’s essay title correctly reads—”A trick of the mind”: Alterity, Ontology, and Representation in Virginia Woolf’s The Waves—and Stacey Oster’s essay title (from the Table of Contents for Mfs 50.2) correctly reads—A “Patch of England, at a three-thousand-Mile Off-set”? Representing America in Mason & Dixon.

NUMBERS

• one, thirty-six, ninety-nine, one hundred, fifteen hundred, three million, 2 1/2; 101; 137; 1,275
• In the case of chapter numbers, use numerals (chapter 4).
• Inclusive dates should appear as 1959-69, unless they span two+ centuries (1789-1832). Do not use a comma between a month and a year (August 1998).
• To refer to decades using numbers, use 1920s, not ‘20s or 1920’s.
• Spell out ordinal numbers and fractions (one-third, nineteenth-century politics, second chapter, Second World War).

Avoid Using Block Quotations

Students love block quotations because they take up space, but professors hate them because they override your voice and are rarely necessary. 1) Ask yourself whether the full quotation is necessary. 2) Make sure to spend as much space analyzing the quotation as the quotation itself. 3) Avoid using them.

Numbers at a Glance

Spell out numbers that can be written in a word or two, but represent other numbers by numerals.
Use a hyphen (not a slash) to join coequal nouns (writer-critic, scholar-athlete) or a compound adjective including ordinals (second-semester courses, early-thirteenth-century fashions).

- Do not use a hyphen with these prefixes: anti, co, extra, inter, intra, multi, non, over, post, pre, pro, re, semi, socio, sub, trans, un, under. See Chicago page 229 for a more complete list.

- Do hyphenate if two like vowels are juxtaposed (semi-invalid) or readability is in question, or if the second element is a number or is capitalized (post-1960s, anti-Semitic).

- Do hyphenate compound adjectives when they precede the noun, including those ending with the present or the past participle and those beginning with an adverb such as better, best, ill, lower, little, or well (ill-conceived plan, short-term effect). But do not hyphenate a compound made up of an adverb and an adjective (highly developed plan). Do not hyphenate compounds beginning with too, very, or much (much maligned editorial assistant). And if a compound adjective follows the noun it modifies, do not hyphenate (The plan is ill conceived).

**Hyphen, En-Dash, Em-Dash:** -, –, —

A hyphen is used for the reasons above.

An en-dash is used to demarcate a range of time (2003–2013).

An em-dash is used to set aside a clause, akin to a parentheses or a comma.

**Commas in a Series**

Always use the final comma to separate items in a series of three or more (hairy, dirty, and smelly).

**Quotation Marks**

Don’t use single quotes (except for a quote within a quote), even when the author is coining a phrase.

**Commas/M-Dashes/Parentheses**

Commas suggest a brief interruption from the flow of a sentence. For instance the interruption of a book title: Jacques Derrida’s most important work, Grammatology, argues XYZ.

Parentheses, however, show an interruption that is unimportant to the text, or semi-relevant, but still useful information. You might say that “Phil Simms is a (somewhat lackluster) commentator on CBS’s NFL Today show.”

M-dashes, however, are a hybrid. A longer interruption that must be set off from the sentence, but also vital to the sentence’s understanding. They are often used in condensing sentences, giving definitions, or just generally for clarification’s sake.
LITERARY PERIODS AND MOVEMENTS

from www.online-literature.com