

Glendale College Library Workshop

Literary Criticism Research – Outline

- I. Introduction (3 minutes)
 1. Explain to students that this is an advanced, rather specialized workshop. It is best if they have taken the Catalog Workshop and Periodicals Workshop previously so that they have basic skills.
 2. Tell them that the agenda for this workshop is to go through the process of identifying and locating different types of information to support the study of literature.
 3. Point out the definitions of literary criticism at the top of the handout. "These definitions are broad, so you can see how the types of information you might use to study literature might be quite varied. Look at the 'Key Sources for Literary Criticism' on the handout. We will make a list (on the white board) of all the different types of information we encounter during this session. As you can see, they might be found in more than one of these four kinds of sources."
 4. Also point out the URL for GCC's online Literary Criticism Research Guide at the top of the handout. "You can consult it for research assistance."
<http://www.glendale.edu/library/linins/icweb/ResGuides/Lit/LitCritResearchGuide.htm>

- II. Online Catalog (10 minutes)
 1. Ask students to describe how to use the library catalog as a brief review. Next, start by showing students how to find books on their author or on their author's works.
 2. Demonstrate subject search using author's name as subject ["poe, edgar allan" produces a good assortment of biography and criticism. Also "twain, mark" and "o'connor, flannery"]. Point out the different subject headings that are retrieved with an author-as-subject search. "Do you see any different types of information in the subjects?" [Begin to make a list of the different types of information on the white board.]
 3. Open up a couple of book records and point out the subject headings and how they can be useful in searching for other books. (e.g. on topics rather than specific authors—"heroes in literature", "naturalism in literature", "irony in literature", etc.)
 4. Ask questions like "how would you search for books with criticism or interpretations of 'Beloved'" to lead them toward trying a **ADVANCED KEYWORD** search for criticism or interpretation and beloved (in case they don't know the proper subject headings to use).
 5. What kinds of books are we finding? Ideally students will come up with things like "biography", "criticism", "interpretation" (the "o'connor" search reveals a subject heading for "correspondence" which is another type of information to add to the list); you will probably have to point out the concept of anthology of critical essays. Point out the types of information you identify as you go along; add them to the list.

- III. Exercise I: **Reference Sources** of information in literature (15 minutes)
 1. Divide students into groups of two or three (depending on how large the class is). Give each group a reference source with the appropriate laminated question in it.
 2. Instruct students as follows:
 - i. Read the question in your reference source.
 - ii. Next, explore the reference source with your group, looking at how it is organized, whether it has an index, table of contents, both. Is it arranged alphabetically? Are there additional tables, etc. at the front or back?
 - iii. Examine the entries in your source. Are they brief, dictionary-like? Are they detailed? Do they recommend sources for further reading? What kind of information is in this source? criticism, historical, biographical, plot summary, character analysis, etc.

- iv. Be prepared to explain how you would use this reference source to answer the question you've been given. Don't answer the question! Explain how you arrived at the answer using this particular reference source. Your group must limit your report to 1-2 mins.
3. Give student groups about 6-8 minutes to prepare; then ask 2 or 3 groups (you won't have time for more) to report on their reference source. Be sure to ask for reports that will illustrate different kinds of reference sources (i.e. you don't want reports from just the poetry dictionaries; and the Shakespeare work and the Dickens work are very similar; choose two or three groups that have different kinds of sources).
4. If you can, elicit the concept of "literary theory". [THEORY: "the general or abstract principles of a body of fact, a science, or an art"]. The *Columbia Dict. Of Mod. Lit. and Cultural Criticism* and the *Dict. Of Lit. Terms and Lit. Theory* are good for this. The *Literature and Its Times* books are good for eliciting the concept of literature in its HISTORICAL CONTEXT. Continue to write the different types of information students come up with on the white board list.

IV. Literature Resource Center (30-33 minutes)

1. Ask students to explore the list of *Databases* on the GCC Library home page, and say which they would use to find information about literature. [LRC is the obvious, but make sure ProQuest and Biography Resource Center get mentioned as well].
2. Review remote access information for LRC.
3. Open LRC database and point out *Encyclopedia of Literature* as yet another available reference source.
4. **Exercise II:** Refer students to Exercise II in their handout and explain purpose and process of exercise.
 - i. LRC is a very useful database for research in literature.
 - ii. It is a complex database containing many types of information
 - iii. Rather than demonstrate the database to you, you will probably learn more about it by exploring it yourselves.
 - iv. We will divide up into small groups and each group will explore a different part of the database and then summarize it for the entire class.
5. This exercise works best if all groups are using the same author. So, either ask for suggestions from class (but make sure the author they propose has all "tabs" present in the LRC database), or use one that you know has documents present in all "tabs" (here's a list of possibilities: Tim O'Brien, Edgar Allan Poe, Flannery O'Connor, Amy Tan, Mark Twain, Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, James Baldwin, Jonathan Swift, Homer)
6. Decide on an author to search. Demonstrate a simple Author search for the author you have selected. Point out the various "tabs" across the top of the screen. Open the **Literary Historical Timeline** "tab" and model for the class how you would "explore" it and summarize its contents (this section of the worksheet is already completed as an example: *In this "tab" you can see all the dates that fall within the author's lifetime. It is a list of literary and historical events, key figures, social and literary movements. It can give you a sense of what was going on in the world when this author lived. It is historical background information.*)
7. Divide class into groups of 3 and instruct students as follows:
 - i. Each group will be responsible for a different area of the database [assign a division of the database to each group (some tabs may need to be assigned to more than one group): 1) Biographies, 2) Literary Criticism, 3) Articles, 4) Work Overviews, 5) Bibliographies, and 6) Additional Resources (show how Lit. Crit., Articles, and Work Overviews are subdivisions of one "tab").]
 - ii. You will have 8 minutes to "explore" the section your group is responsible for.
 - iii. Then your group will report on what you have found. Be prepared to explain what "type/s of information" you find. You will have only 1-2 minutes to report to the class.

- iv. As you explore make notes in the corresponding space on the table in your handout. These will be the basis of your report to the class.
 - v. As the groups make their reports the rest of the class can fill in notes on the table for the parts of the database they were not responsible for.
8. Add to the whiteboard list any new types of information (criticism, reviews, historical background, etc.) that may come up during the course of this exercise.
 9. After the groups have reported out, demonstrate a search or two to delve into some details that may or may not have come out in Exercise 2: (Morrison is given as an example; use your own as you prefer.)
 - i. **Themes:** Author search for "morrison, toni"; go to "Additional Resources"; then "themes". Browse list of themes. This can be used to find other authors that treat same themes or to browse themes used by Morrison.
 - ii. **Advanced search:** morrison, toni (author); + "ghosts" (from the themes list) as keyword; and document type, select "critical essay" yields three articles.
 - iii. **"Control-F":** Open one of the documents in the "Morrison + ghosts" search and use "control-F" to search for the word "ghosts" in the text of the document.
 - iv. **Print and Email:** Point out Print and Email icons at the top of an article and demo. how to send.
 - v. **MLA Format:** "source" at bottom of article is not correct citation for MLA; see "Research Guide" to find correct MLA citation form for Gale "documents".
 - vi. **Pseudonyms:** found using the BASIC author search.
 - vii. **Advanced search:** One more to demo if time allows: any author (as author) and "influence*" (as keyword). Or any author (as author) and another author (as keyword) [Example: Kerouac (as author) and Melville (as keyword)]
 10. Finally, encourage them to spend time getting to know LRC; it is a complex database and they will not become expert users right away, but will discover more and more of the features it offers if they take their time exploring it. And, consult with a reference librarian!

NOTE: Be sure to spend some time becoming familiar with the reference sources used for Exercise 1. Make sure you know how best to use these sources to answer the questions before you give them to students.

NOTE:
The Online Catalog section of this Workshop assumes students have already taken the Online Catalog Workshop. You don't have time for basic online catalog instruction. Refer students to Online Catalog workshop if they have questions.