

A Brief Guide to Writing Literary Research Papers

Most academic, literary research papers follow the MLA Citation guidelines. Online access to the MLA Citation format can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>. A paper copy of the guideline book can be found in the Writing Center (NH 209). Generally literary research papers are required to be in 12pt, Times New Roman font.

The goal of a literary research paper is to formulate a thesis based on the primary text(s) and to prove this thesis using the primary text and secondary sources.

- A **Thesis Statement** is a debatable argument used to organize a paper. It is often your interpretation of the primary text.
 - For Example: In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, the various houses in which Edna Pontellier finds herself symbolize the different stages of her awakening.
- The **Primary Text** is the source of literature that you are relating everything to.
 - For Example: *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin
- The **Secondary Sources** are critical articles or others writings about the primary source material.
 - For Example: JSTOR, Academic One File, Info Trac, and MLA International Bibliography articles.

As you move to writing your paper make sure you organize your paper in some type of logical format. Support each part of your paper by:

1.) Stating the Claim

The House at Grand Isle represents the first stage in Edna's awakening.

2.) Giving the Reasons

A. Supporting the claim with Primary Text

Edna stayed "at the house on Grand Isle" (Chopin 23).

B. Supporting the claim with Secondary Sources

John Smith, who wrote *Edna Loves Houses*, argues Edna is unhappy at Grand Isle "because she is inhibited by the social conventions the house represents" (23).

3.) Analyzing and Drawing a Conclusion/Significance

Edna's unhappiness is caused by the social conventions placed on her. The house at Grand Isle symbolizes these conventions, which is why she is so unhappy there.

Always remember to consider your rhetorical situation and maintain an academic tone. Stay away from words like "you," "us," "we," "me," and "I." Transitional words help the paper move from one paragraph to another. For more questions, please feel free to stop the by the Writing Center to make an appointment or schedule one online at <http://csuniv.mywconline.com/>.

Bullock, Richard, Maureen Goggin, and Francine Weinberg. *The Norton Field Guide to Writing with Readings and Handbook*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. Print.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009. Print.