

PURPOSE

An annotated bibliography can be a useful step in your research process, helping you understand your topic, narrow your focus, and develop your thesis. Annotated bibliographies may be standalone assignments, or they may be part of larger research projects. Writing an annotated bibliography is an effective way for you to determine if the sources you have located will be useful as you write, as well as how you will actually use them to substantiate your thesis/claims.

DESCRIPTION

Like a standard bibliography (i.e., “References” or “Works Cited”), an annotated bibliography lists source citations alphabetically. After each citation, however, an annotated bibliography includes one or more paragraphs about the source. Annotations begin by summarizing the source’s main ideas. Depending on the assignment, they may then go on to provide an evaluation of the source’s credibility and its relevance or usefulness to the larger research project. Annotation length can vary considerably by assignment; a *basic* annotation is approximately 200 words.

COMPONENTS OF AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRY	List all sources alphabetically according to the appropriate style guide (i.e., MLA, APA, CMS).
SUMMARY	Describe the main idea, argument, and purpose of the source.
ANALYSIS	Evaluate whether the source is credible by describing qualities of the author, publication, and sources the author cites; point out the source’s strengths/weaknesses.
REFLECTION	Identify how the source fits into the larger context of your research.

STYLE

Cite sources according to the appropriate style. In MLA, begin the annotation immediately after the citation (not on a new line); continue hanging indentation for the entire annotation. In CMS, begin one line immediately below the citation; keep the entire annotation flush with the hanging indent. APA does not address annotated bibliography format; we suggest following CMS. *Always defer to your instructor’s guidelines when formatting annotated bibliographies.*

EXAMPLE (APA)

Underlined terms (i.e., SUMMARY) are included only for illustration and should NOT appear in your annotations.

Brink-Roby, H. (2008). *Siren canora*: The mermaid and the mythical in late nineteenth-century science. *Archives of Natural History*, 35(1), 1-14. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/E0260954108000041> (BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRY)

In her article about how mythical creatures fit into the discussion of evolution, Heather Brink-Roby presents the mermaid as the battleground for conflicting responses to Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theories during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Some scholars considering Darwin’s work thought the mermaid was biologically possible because of the extensive biodiversity already recognized at the time, yet Darwin’s ideological opponents saw representations of mythological creatures as clear evidence of the absurdity of his claims concerning adaptation and evolution (SUMMARY). Brink-Roby’s article is credible because her research includes sources dating between 1850 and 1900 rather than contemporary sources that only comment on the scientific culture of the nineteenth century. She includes research from both sides of the debate surrounding Darwin’s evolutionary theories, and her essay was selected as the 2007 winner of the William T. Stearns Student Essay Prize from the Society for the History of Natural History and published in a peer-reviewed publication, *The Archives of Natural History* (ANALYSIS). This source will be used to demonstrate the fluidity of scientific thought and how new evidence contributes to conversations in natural history. The source demonstrates that while reactions to Darwin based on mythological creatures may seem comical today, such interpretations represented serious

scientific thought in the late nineteenth century (REFLECTION).

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