LITERARY ANALYSIS RESEARCH

Carol Leibiger, Ph.D., MSLIS

Associate Professor, University Libraries
WHY DO WE READ?

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

“Literature is part of our cultural heritage which is freely available to everyone, and which can enrich our lives in all kinds of ways…These works say something worth saying. Their beauty captures people’s attention and satisfies their souls. This beauty does not lie only on WHAT is said, but HOW it is said.”  The Literature Network Forums blog
WHY DO LITERARY ANALYSIS?

It gives us an opportunity to read and enjoy great literature.

It lets us formulate and communicate ideas about literature.

Write on, sister!
HOW CAN WE APPROACH LITERATURE?

- Structural/formalist approach: use the elements of literature
- Content approach: use a critical lens

It was a dark and stormy night…
Formalists consider how structural elements of the text contribute to the author’s message.

**Checklist of elements of literature**

A good protagonist is hard to find.
Postmodern criticism recognizes that literature is social and can be understood from multiple points of view. It seeks inclusiveness, opening the discussion to dominant and minority voices.

VirtualLit Critical Perspectives

What’s the hobbit perspective?
HOW TO APPROACH A LITERARY ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Make a claim about a text.

Find expert support for your claim.

Argue the claim using evidence.
TWO TYPES OF EVIDENCE

Louisa, expert evidence is found in scholarly books and articles.

Well, Ralph, textual evidence is in the text itself.
FINDING EXPERT SUPPORT

Tradition demands that research be done with books.

But, mon ami, articles are also important sources.
FINDING CRITICAL SOURCES IN BOOKS

Use WorldCat to find:

- Books at USD
- Books elsewhere (anywhere!)

WorldCat
FINDING ARTICLES

Subject-specific databases:
- MLA International Bibliography
- Humanities International Complete

Multi-subject databases:
- JSTOR
- Project MUSE

Get with the times! Use databases to find cutting-edge research.
QUESTIONS?

- Use the [ENGL 210 LibGuide](#) to find scholarly books and articles on literary topics.
- Contact Dr. Carol Leibiger, Language and Literature subject specialist
  C.Leibiger@usd.edu
  677-6089

Take it from a Nobel Prize winner: Use these research methods, and enjoy learning about literature.
I wish to thank the following authors for allowing me to put words into their mouths:

- Jane Austen (Slide 2)
- The Brontë Sisters (Slide 3)
- Edgar Alan Poe (Slide 4)
- Flannery O’Connor (Slide 5)
- J.R.R. Tolkien (Slide 6)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, William Faulkner, Kate Chopin (Slide 7)
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott (Slide 8)
- Charles Dickens, Émile Zola (Slide 9)
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (Slide 10)
- Fyodor Dostoyevsky (Slide 11)
- Sigrid Undset (Slide 12)