

## Research Annotations

Annotations are brief critical reviews that contain one or two sentences summarizing content followed by a few sentences presenting your evaluation of the work. Annotations should provide sufficient information so that a reader may decide whether or not to read the work itself. They clarify the relationship between different sources by differentiating their arguments, use of evidence, conclusions, and biases. They also allow your reader to assess your use of sources and evidence in supporting your argument.

Your annotated bibliography should present a picture of the current scholarly literature surrounding your topic. An understanding of how other researchers have approached your question – including those who disagree with your conclusions – is essential to presenting a well-considered and balanced argument.

Questions to consider in writing annotations:

1. The qualifications or training of the author.
2. The scope and purpose of the work.
3. The argument of the author.
4. The types of evidence considered.
5. The author's assumptions and approach, along with any cautions the reader should keep in mind in evaluating this account.
6. The relationship to other books in the field.
7. How it applies to your larger research question.

In Zotero, you write your research annotations in the “extra” field. (The “abstract field” automatically pulls author-supplied abstracts - not what you need for your annotated bibliography!)

## Sample Entries (Should use a hanging indent for source reference)

### Primary Sources:

Browne, Martha Griffith. *Autobiography of a Female Slave*. New York: Redfield, 1857. Documenting the American South. University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/browne/menu.html>.

Browne, a white former slaveholder from Kentucky, published poems and articles for several abolitionist journals in addition to her novel *Autobiography of a Female Slave*. In this fictional account, Browne employs many of the conventions of slave autobiographies to present a powerful case for abolition. Themes covered include master/slave relationships, the lives of slave children fathered by white men, and slave family life. Browne's creation of an enslaved protagonist so fair-skinned as to be mistaken for white was a constant premise within abolitionist

literature. While she did have first-hand experience living on a plantation, this source is more useful as a representation of the self-presentation of and arguments employed by southern abolitionists than a reliable depiction of the experiences and emotions of former slaves.

Followed by the next annotated primary source in alphabetical order by the author's last name

### **Secondary Sources:**

Beckles, Hilary McD. *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Social historian Hilary McD. Beckles examines the productive and reproductive labor of enslaved women on Barbadian sugar plantations from 1650 to 1850. Beckles argues that the overwhelming focus on the agricultural labor done by sugar slaves has led historians to overlook the economic and social importance of slave women as mothers. His extensive use of plantation records for detailed quantitative analysis is complemented by his use of private correspondence and newspaper accounts to uncover social relationships. Beckles provides a much-needed corrective to studies of plantation life that overlook the significance of gender. This work is useful for my study of slave family formation because it allows me to place my observations about Brazilian sugar plantations in comparative context.