

## CRITICAL ANNOTATIONS

### DEFINITION AND PURPOSE:

Researchers and scholars often must evaluate what they read, even when they are not composing a formal article or paper. An annotated bibliography offers readers a brief overview of or introduction to the resources you consulted as you gathered information for a paper or some other course project. Each entry in an annotated bibliography is composed of two parts – the **citation** and the **annotation**. The citation is the bibliographic entry for each source; the annotation is the brief passage summarizing, responding to, or evaluating it.

### FORMAT:

A critical annotation begins with the bibliographic citation, then an annotation section. The bibliographic citation must adhere to MLA guidelines.

### WHAT TO DO:

- 1) Find a piece of research that adds to your understanding and builds on your prior knowledge of the topic.
- 2) Compose a citation according to MLA format for the research you found. Double-space the citation, observing a 0.5" hanging indent.
- 3) Compose an annotation. Maintain a formal, academic tone. Your critical annotation should be three short, double-spaced paragraphs, which include these three aspects:
  - A) **Summarize:** What are the main details or ideas? What is the point of this book or video or article or interview? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this source is about, what would you say? This may include paraphrase, but must include at least **one direct quotation** (in either case, you should use parenthetical citation for facts/quotes/details).
  - B) **Assess:** After summarizing the source, evaluate it. How does it compare with other sources or your prior knowledge? Is the information reliable? Is this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source? What are the author's/speaker's credentials or expertise? How do you know?
  - C) **Reflect:** Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask yourself how it fits into your research. How was this source helpful or useful to you? How does it help you shape your argument or thinking? How has it changed what you think about the topic? What makes this source's perspective special or significant?
- 4) Proofread your critical annotation for spelling and grammar errors.
- 5) Proofread your document to ensure that it is in proper MLA format.

## Critical Annotation Checklist

- ☐ Critical annotation begins with **citation** for the source in MLA format, double-spaced with a 0.5" hanging indent
- ☐ Document follows MLA format for headers, double-spacing, and margins
- ☐ First annotation paragraph contains a clear **summary** that includes at least **one direct quotation**, cited in parentheses
- ☐ Second annotation paragraph **assesses** the credibility of the source, explaining what is known about the author or site and commenting on the accuracy of information and refers to additional sources as needed (these are cited parenthetically within the text and given as "Additional Works Cited" at the end of the document)
- ☐ Third annotation paragraph **reflects** on the new information found, using first person, to explain how the information fits in with prior knowledge or the current study
- ☐ Annotation paragraphs maintain a formal, academic tone and are written in fluid, complete sentences
- ☐ Additional Works Cited are listed in alphabetical order, following MLA format, at the end of the document

## List of Topics for Critical Annotations related to *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

Read a web article or essay, find information in a book or journal, or watch an educational video on one of these topics:

Marie-Antoinette  
Napoleon Bonaparte  
Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen  
Charles Dickens  
Enlightenment  
Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette  
French Revolution  
Great Fear  
guillotine  
The Frozen Deep, Wilkie Collins  
Jacobins  
Louis XVI  
October March/Women's March on Versailles  
Reign of Terror  
Maximilien Robespierre  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
storming of the Bastille  
Tennis Court Oath  
The Frozen Deep, Wilkie Collins  
Thomas Carlyle  
Victorian England

