



# WRITING CENTER

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## Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography asks you to take a normal bibliography or works cited page and to add **annotations**, paragraphs that describe each source. Annotated bibliographies are meant to help out readers by offering a list of sources and essential information about those sources. Most annotations should be brief (3-6 sentences), unless otherwise indicated.

Here are some questions that you should consider as you write the annotations:

- What is the thesis (main argument) of the book/article?
- For what purpose has it been written?
- Who is the audience?
- What viewpoint does the author hold? What ideological assumptions does the author bring to the work?
- What topics does the book/article cover? What types of evidence does it use?
- What parts of the argument or analysis are particularly persuasive, what parts aren't, and why?
- Is there anything unusual or special about this book that others might find interesting? (For example, does it include an appendix in which a rare document is printed?)

### Sample Annotations

The citations in your bibliography should still follow the style guidelines of your discipline. Below are sample annotations for MLA and APA style. These samples strive to be balanced, but consider your purpose; sometimes it can be appropriate to make comments like “beautifully written” or “difficult to read, but the appendices are extremely helpful.”

#### MLA style:

King, John N. “Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 43.1 (Spring 1990): 30-74.

King argues that rather than remaining constant throughout the reign, Queen Elizabeth’s public image as a Virgin Queen actually goes through distinct changes. At the beginning of her reign, she is portrayed as a marriageable virgin, but at the end, she is depicted as a perpetual virgin. The turning point, he suggests, is her courtship by the French Duc Alencon (1578-81). In fact, her modern reputation as a powerful virgin queen actually derives primarily from posthumous representations of her, most influentially those created by William Camden in the 1620s-30s.

APA style:

Gould, S.J., & Eldridge, N. (1977). Punctuated equilibria: the tempo and mode of evolution reconsidered. *Paleobiology*, 3, 115-151.

This famous article presents an alternative to Darwinian evolutionary theory. Gould and Eldridge suggest that evolution is not distinguished by slow, gradual change (as in traditional Darwinian phyletic gradualism), but rather that evolutionary change occurs in periodic bursts that “punctuate” the general “equilibrium” of life. They support this argument by analyzing data for *Hyopsodus*, emphasizing that even the times of stasis can then be considered as evidence—an important detail for them, since the study of evolutionary progress has been biased towards phyletic gradualism. Ultimately, they argue, speciation, rather than the evolution of phyla, characterizes how life evolves.