

# **How to Write a Research Paper in Literature**

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The difference between a research paper and a paper for which no research is done is both simple (in that one uses research, while the other doesn't) and complex. A non-research paper is about a text and you, the writer, and your skills as a reader of a text. A research paper, on the other hand, can be about both that and something larger. Kenneth Burke describes it as an engagement in a conversation that may stretch back thousands of years and include any number of other voices. You contribute to that conversation by making yourself an informed participant in it. You become not just a careful reader of the text in question, but a historian of that text's life. You know when it was born, who some of its friends and enemies were, what it accomplished for better or for worse, and how it has been remembered or forgotten or misunderstood by those who came after it. In knowing those things and contributing to the conversation about the text, you keep it alive—not just the text, but the conversation about it, which is probably even more important. And this conversation is never really just about the text. It's also always about what we read, how we read, why we read, and what we value.

Let me admit, right off the bat, that I love researching and writing papers, especially when things go smoothly. Below is a list of lessons I've learned—some of them the hard way—about how to make the process of writing a research paper as trouble-free and enjoyable as possible. If I seem to have frequent recourse to the vocabulary of empirical science, it's because I believe that, at many levels, research in literature can and should partake of the sort of diligent, systematic hard work that takes place in a laboratory. We tend to mystify the process of critical writing and think of it as the product of genius rather than labor, but it really is based on simple work and even uses some of the same processes as hard science: forming a hypothesis, collecting data or evidence, testing those data and evidence against the hypothesis, modifying the hypothesis into a thesis, and then reaching a conclusion. This isn't to say that your personal feelings and emotions don't come into play. On the contrary, they do, and they can be very useful to getting you into an early sense of what you see the text trying to communicate.

This pamphlet walks through those steps. At the end, I have included samples of an annotated bibliography and a formal proposal for a research paper. The first is adapted from one submitted by Carol Lane in my Victorian Novel class in Spring 2009. The second is one I threw together myself based on something I wrote as a student.

[This wee manual will be a work in constant progress, so any suggestions you have for its improvement would be much appreciated. This version was done on 14 January 2015. I hope it proves helpful for colleagues anywhere who wish to use it, and I only ask that you a) cite me when doing so and b) let me know if you have any suggestions for future drafts of it.]

***Step 1: Select a field of inquiry and develop a working hypothesis.***

One of the most important things we get out of studying texts is the sense of how important it is to pay attention. If you read carefully, you will **notice things** in a text: a recurring theme or style of writing or structure, patterns that seem to ask to be explained. For example, you might ask yourself, “Why does the author continually use adjectives like ‘little’ or ‘small’ to refer to this one character’s work?” Or “Why is it that all of the businesspeople in this particular novel are ruthless bastards except for one of them? Is the author making a point about business in general, or about the ethical heroics of one individual in a world that is primarily ruthless?” Whether or not the author “intended” those patterns to be there might even be beside the point. It could be even more interesting if those patterns emerged *despite* the author’s not having deliberately considered and constructed them, because then they might reveal something so deep-seated in that text’s historical moment that the pattern simply emerged as part of the fabric of the work, unconsciously.

**Pick a text that interests you, or a theme that you see operating in a text or in more than one text.** What is it about this text that feels important? What is it about this theme that seems important to the text? In what ways does understanding this one particular theme allow us to explain other, perhaps even larger, issues in the text? For the purposes of this exercise, we’ll use the example of the theme of social mobility in Honoré de Balzac’s *Père Goriot*. You can’t really escape this theme in the novel, because, first of all, the protagonist’s main quest is to climb up the social ladder. But the novel is actually chock full of social climbers and comments on social climbing. Why? How is social climbing used in the novel? How is it described? Who tries to climb, and what does the novel do to those who try to climb? Does it punish them? Reward them?

Before you look at what others have said about it, you’ll have your own ideas, your own working hypothesis. You may have noticed that social climbing is often compared to very violent acts, like murder or battle. You may also have noticed that nothing good happens to the social climbers—they end up broke, rejected, or scandalized. Based on those observations about the depiction of social mobility in the novel, we can **generate a hypothesis**.

Let’s say we believe the following: By using the vocabulary of violence and imperialism to describe upward mobility in *Père Goriot*, and by showing the horrible fates of upwardly-mobile characters like Goriot and Anastasie, Balzac asks his reader to be critical of those who would climb the social ladder and of social climbing in general.

There’s a preliminary thesis, but it’s just a working hypothesis for now.

## ***Step 2: Gather your sources.***

At this stage, you prepare yourself to enter into the ongoing conversation about the novel. You do this by informing yourself about what others before you have said. Don't worry about knowing everything; unless you're writing a Ph.D. dissertation on a topic, you don't really have to know everything that's been said. You just need to have a sense of what a few other people have thought about this particular text, or about social climbing, or about the historical period in question.

- A. **What else has been written** about the theme of social mobility in Honoré de Balzac's *Père Goriot*? On social mobility in Balzac's work in general? If no one has written on this particular theme, either in *Père Goriot* or in Balzac's other works, are there critical essays or books that *do* discuss this theme as it appears in texts by other authors, or that discuss this theme in general? Do scholars from other fields—history, anthropology, economics, political science—have anything to contribute to this debate?

There are lots of places you can go for help finding relevant sources. Here are a few:

### 1. Library Search Engines

To answer these questions, start by running a search through the MLA International Bibliography. This will help you locate articles, chapters, and books on the theme you've picked.

Go to: <http://www.csuchico.edu/library/>  
Click on "About Finding Articles"  
Click on "Browse all databases (A-Z)"  
Find MLA International Bibliography

Run another search through JSTOR.

Go to: <http://www.csuchico.edu/library/>  
Click on "About Finding Articles"  
Click on "Browse all databases (A-Z)"  
Find JSTOR

**\*\*N.B. On the MLA International Bibliography vs. JSTOR\*\***

There are advantages and disadvantages to both of these databases. JSTOR contains and indexes only downloadable, full-text articles, and, even better, you can do a full-text search of the articles it contains. Interested in researching a minor character in a novel? MLA, which indexes only titles of articles and search terms specified by authors or publishers of articles, will likely not give you hits on minor characters, but JSTOR, which can search through the articles' text itself, will.

The caveat is this: JSTOR's coverage, if you're interested in being thorough and finding the most relevant sources possible, is minuscule compared to that of the MLA Bibliography. For Languages & Literature, for example, JSTOR indexes roughly 100 journals, while the MLA indexes thousands of journals—about 4,000, to be more precise—as well as books, both single-author productions and edited volumes by multiple authors. MLA can also lead you to downloadable articles not indexed or stored on JSTOR, such as those on Project MUSE or EBSCO, for example. If you are an undergraduate writing a term paper, thoroughness is not necessarily something you should worry about, but, if you are a grad student working on the seminar paper or thesis, you want to know more about what others have said.

Because it will only take you a few more seconds for each search, the ideal solution is to simply use both, so that you are as informed as possible about the critical conversation surrounding the text in question. MLA will give you more hits, but JSTOR, despite its more limited coverage, might tell you something about those hits that you can't get from the slightly limited searching functions of MLA (limited only in the sense that you can't do full-text searches of articles).

## 2. Other Search Engines

Google is the obvious first resource here, and it has the added advantage of leading you to the growing cache of books housed online and free to access. Most of these open-access books will be older, and the reason that they're online for free is that the copyright has lapsed. Depending on your topic, though, these can still be useful.

Odd as it may sound, Amazon.com's search functions can be even more useful, for research purposes, than Google's. The reason is that, while Google searches for terms, Amazon can recommend to you things that others who searched for those terms found interesting, even if those other items don't contain the key terms and thus would never have come up in a Google search. Google looks for the words you type in; Amazon's searches are associative, and so anything that previous users repeatedly associated with your terms will also come up. And you don't have to buy these books, because you can always just look for them in your library.

## 3. Social Media

Instead of posting pictures of your food or getting into rants about Kim Kardashian with somebody you haven't talked to since sophomore year of

high school, why not put Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to their most truly powerful use, as tools for tapping into the knowledge of everybody who has access to your questions? Here's something my colleagues and I do all the time, when we are seeking help in gathering sources for a paper: We might head to Facebook and post, as our status update, "Hivemind: Anybody know of any good sources on upward mobility in Balzac?" If you make this status public, your friends can tag their friends in it, and that increases exponentially the number of people whose advice might help you.

Twitter can be even more powerful for these purposes, because an increasing number of academics (read: potential experts in the topic on which you are writing) have Twitter accounts. Interested in the topic of upward mobility? Tweet at a faculty member of the Literature Department at Columbia University in New York City, who wrote a whole book on upward mobility in novels. Be respectful, do your homework first rather than simply asking them to do it for you, and know that you're asking a huge favor from a stranger. But know, too, that most of us who got into the business of teaching and writing about literature did so because we are enthusiastic about it and eager to share our idea with others and hear their ideas. There's a good chance you might get some serviceable suggestions.

Finally, there are numerous blogs maintained and regularly updated by people who are passionate about literature and love to write about it. Blogs might contain useful information about sources relevant to your topic, but even more importantly they are an opportunity to engage with others who could clue you in to sources and ideas. You can do this by posting comments on a blog whose author or whose community of readers seems interested in the questions you have to ask.

Any sources you get tuned into through social media and blogs can also then be sought out in the library or online through Google.

- B. Once you've sought these sources out in the library's databases, you can have the results e-mailed to you.

Once you get them, compile a list in MS Word, GoogleDocs, or whichever word processor you prefer, and print it out or have it accessible on a device. The list should, at the very least, have all the bibliographical info you'll need to be able to find the articles, books, or book chapters either in the library or online. It can also serve, later, as the beginning of your Works Cited page, although substantial editing will likely be needed in order to make the list conform to MLA standards for a Works Cited page.

- C. Searching the library's holdings at <http://www.csuchico.edu/library/books.htm>, find out which items the library owns and which it does not. If the library **does**

have an item, write down the call number next to it on your list. If you are going to be using a larger research library, it may help to write down the floor number on which the item is found, so that you can get all of the things you need from each floor before moving on. This will save you running up and down stairs or retracing your steps, which is good for exercise but not for efficiency or patience, especially when you're burdened with a growing load of books!

If the library **does not** have an item, can you order it from Interlibrary Loan (ILL)? Find it in a local bookstore? Borrow it from a friend or colleague? Find it at a large, public library nearby, such as UC Davis' or Berkeley's? Preparing well in advance gives you more options, because ILL takes time. Unfortunately, it can also cost money, although it is often free.

- D. Using your list, check out all of the books and photocopy or scan all of the articles or book chapters that look relevant. Read the first section of each article to see whether that author's interests relate to the concerns of your project or offer any interesting perspectives on the questions you're asking of Balzac's text.

**Step 3: Do your research.**

- A. Read through the sources you've collected. Pay attention to interesting arguments, especially as they relate to your project or where they seem to offer competing ideas about Balzac's novel. Pay special attention to moments of close reading by these other critics, above all close readings of the same passages or chapters or characters you hope to address in the novel.
- B. Take notes in a way that feels comfortable and thorough to you. Use this as a chance to begin your conversation with the authors you're reading. Here's an example of some notes I took on Dean de la Motte's essay on *Goriot*. The bibliographical entry is first. All of the text below that is comprised of quotes from de la Motte. Anything in brackets is a musing or mental note of my own, but not a quote. You need to keep track of what's yours and what's not, so that you can give proper credit whenever using the other author's words or ideas. I insert bracketed slash marks ([/]) to note where a quote straddles two pages of text (these distinctions are important when you have to cite certain pages). Where I'm quoting de la Motte quoting someone else, I try to note whose words are whose, because I'll need to know, if I plan to use this in my paper.

de la Motte, Dean. "Balzacorama: Mass Culture in *Old Goriot*." *Approaches to Teaching Balzac's Old Goriot*. Ed. Michal Peled Ginsburg. New York: Modern Language Association of American, 2000. 54-61. Print.

. . . the narrator's use of details to establish an aesthetic hierarchy of class or authenticity analogous to the social . . . (54)

Balzac, who would go on to write *Physiologie de l'employé* ("Physiology of the Bureaucrat" [1841]), itself to be incorporated into a later version of *La Femme supérieure* entitled *Les Employés (The Bureaucrats)*, is one of the earliest and most penetrating critics of the bureaucracy created [/] under Napoleon and usually associated with the mechanized, scientific approach to administration synonymous with modern life. (55-6)

One notes here that Balzac's acute analysis of postrevolutionary society shows the possibility of not only upward but also downward mobility . . . (58)

[Vautrin as salesman in his attempts to convince R to like Victorine Taillefer (59)]

...what Pierre Larousse, in his article "Progrès" in the *Grand Dictionnaire*, would call "la foi de notre [/] siècle" 'our century's religion.' (59-60)

Of course, you don't have to be this thorough with full quotes, etc., but I find it helpful. And please note that this is a system that has worked for me, but you might find ways of note-taking that work better for you. If you will be able to keep the materials from the library for the duration of your paper-writing, you can bookmark the relevant passages (in a non-destructive way, like with a Post-It).

The advantage of writing them down, though, is that you will always have them, even after you have to return the book to the library, and if you type them into a computer they are also searchable. Can't find that quote about a certain passage that you remember typing into your notes? Hit CTL + F, type in a few of the words you remember, and you'll probably be reunited with it.

- C. Be alert for patterns in the *reception* (the critical appraisals) of the work you're writing on. Does everybody tend to see certain aspects of *Père Goriot* the same way you do? Who agrees with you, and who doesn't? Are there dissenting cases compelling enough to make you re-think parts of your hypothesis?

If you come across a consistent pattern of reception, and your take on the text challenges that pattern or even just highlights inadequacies in it (e.g., gratuitous misreadings of the text), you have something even more substantial to contribute to the debate: You have an argument that could change how this text is viewed by future scholars, because you will be intervening to correct things you see in the existing pattern.

- D. You should know, too, that sifting through other scholars' work is scholarship all the same, *even if you find nothing that you feel is related to your thesis*. This can feel temporarily demoralizing, but part of the work of research is confronting dead ends, just like in the laboratory; if an experiment doesn't work, you've eliminated a possibility, and that's a job well done, even if it doesn't feel like it. Much of what you look at might not help your case, but knowing that fact is also useful information. It allows you to say things like "Scholars have largely neglected the manner in which Balzac's novel does blah blah blah..." You know of a certainty what the trends are and that you might have something new to contribute.

- E. **Be intellectually curious.** If a number of sources you consult all refer to the same essay or book on your text or topic, why not track it down? If others are constantly referencing it, then it must be a critical touchstone of some sort that would help your understanding of the conversation surrounding the text. And if that source is central to the conversation, it is better to have read that text and to be able to quote from it directly than to rely on others' glosses of it. You might even discover that the author using the quotes is giving her or his own spin on them, and if you've read the actual source material, you can offer a correction.

- F. A sample annotated bibliography is included below.

#### ***Step 4: Make a mental map.***

##### A. What's the map?

We have already mentioned, in our hypothesis thesis above, a few things we'll need to discuss in order to demonstrate it effectively:

1. the vocab of violence and how it relates to upward mobility;
2. the vocab of imperialism and how it relates to upward mobility;
3. the fate of the upwardly-mobile Goriot;
4. and the fate of the upwardly-mobile Anastasie.

We can begin by listing those four subtopics as areas we will have to develop, probably with multiple paragraphs each, which is how a paper swells out to fill your teacher's or your thesis' page-length requirements!

##### B. Different types of maps

I prefer to use an outline, but other ways of visualizing the relationship of these four parts to each other—and to your argument's whole—can work just as well. If this were an outline, under each of the subtopics we could list the relevant quotes from the novel *and from the reception*, so that we can begin creating and moderating our own discussion of the topic. Our discussion of the topic will demonstrate an awareness not just of how the topic is treated in the novel but also of how other scholars have treated the topic or the passages that we'll be reading closely.

As you begin to fill in your outline with ideas that will merit discussion in each paragraph, you may begin to envision other important, intermediary steps. Might you need a paragraph linking the first two points—that is, linking violence and imperialism, rather than constantly treating them as separable topics? Might there be links between the text's treatment of Goriot and Anastasie that could allow you to subtly move from one discussion to the next? These things become more and more evident as you begin to chart your moves in an outline, listing the other critics you'll address and the passages from the novel that you'll want to discuss as examples to develop your case.

##### C. Why do we need a map? Why do we need to organize our argument?

This mental map is not just for you, because this paper is not just for you. While outlines can be particularly useful for us as writers approaching the writing of the paper, they're probably even more helpful for the reader who will have to come along and read our paper, because the outline will help us lay our case out clearly. The more clearly you write, and the more organized your argument is, the easier it is for your audience to follow your lines of thought, and the more persuasive and provocative you can be. Think of your audience as a friend you've sent into your room to find a sock for you. If your room is messy and things are all over the

place, and if all you've said is, "Go into my room and find my sock," then Good luck. You will never see your sock. If your room is organized and uncluttered—if it's well outlined and you lead your friend from point to point by saying, "Go find my sock, which is behind the bed, next to the dresser, under a pile of *Popular Mechanics* magazines"—your friend and audience will see what you want them to, and your sock will be found.

- D. A sample proposal is included below.

## *Step 5: Start writing.*

### A. Setting Up Your Document in MS Word

The Modern Language Association has a standard set of guidelines for research papers in the humanities. Learning and following these guidelines isn't just a matter of following silly rules; it is a lesson in how to write within the style of a certain field of study. Formatting your paper improperly and providing inaccurate or incomplete citations makes it less easy for others to follow your contribution to the conversation. Proper formatting and proper citation of sources don't just make your paper look professional and polished. They also make it easier for your audience to find information they might wish to seek, because they will know where to look for it. This, too, is another way for you to actively participate in the ongoing conversation about the text you've chosen to write about.

Before you start writing, take 2 minutes to set your document up properly. This list can also be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

1. Enter the Page Set-up screen. (In Word 2002, click on File, scroll down to Page Set-up.)
2. Set all margins (top, bottom, left, and right) to 1". Word defaults to margins of 1.25" on right and left sides, so it needs to be changed. You can click on "Default" in order to make the one-inch margins your default settings for future assignments and save yourself some time!
3. Enter the Font menu. (In Word 2002, click on Format, and scroll down to Font.) Set the font to 12-point Times New Roman. This is the standard font for professional communications in most fields.
4. Enter the Paragraph menu. (In Word 2002, click on Format, and scroll down to Paragraph.) Set the spacing to "double." Set the "after" spacing and the "before" spacing to 0 pt. ("After" and "before" spacing inserts a certain amount of room either before or after a paragraph, and there should be none but the normal double-spacing. New versions of Word default with "after" and "before" spacing, and it is commonly seen in text on the internet, but in formal essays it is not used.)

N.B.: Everything in your paper will be double-spaced, including "**block quotes**," quotes set up in a block rather than in quotation marks because they are longer than 4-5 lines of text.

To format a block quote, begin typing it in as if it were a new paragraph. Put the cursor at the start of the first line, and hit CTL + T twice. This will create what is known as a "hanging indent," shifting all text below the first line. Then press Tab twice to shift

the first line over. The whole thing should look like a block set off two tabs from the left margin (1" from that margin, so 2" from the edge of the page). The right side of the block quote should NOT be indented any more than the rest of the paper is. It should be flush with the right margin.

5. Insert page numbers. (In Word 2002, click on Insert and scroll down to Page Numbers.) Choose the upper right-hand corner.
6. The Works Cited page is a necessary and valued component of a research paper, and it will be discussed below.
7. As there are many other word-processing programs out there, from Works to GoogleDocs, etc., just make sure to learn how to use your preferred platform, so that you can do to a paper what is supposed to be done. Most of these programs have easy-to-find FAQ sections, or you can do a Google search for answers (e.g., "How do I insert page numbers in GoogleDocs?"). Not knowing how to use your word processor is no excuse, any more than showing up to a baseball game unsure of how to put on shoes. If you are playing the game, you need to know how to use the tools. And if you've had trouble finding answers to your questions online, talk with classmates who use your same word processor, or ask your instructor.

## B. Intro

Begin by writing your intro, and then move through your outline. Don't be afraid, as you move through your writing, to jump back and re-develop earlier paragraphs if you uncover connections you didn't see previously that can help you further develop your case. Don't be afraid to present views of critics who disagree with you; explain very diplomatically why your reading of the novel is more accurate than theirs or what their reading might overlook or conceal. You can also simply agree to disagree, and this is typically done in a footnote or endnote: "So-and-so offers a different reading of this passage by arguing that blah blah blah." You've done your due diligence in reporting the difference of opinion, and you can leave it to your reader to look at the other side of it, if she or he is curious.

Your introduction is meant to introduce your paper, and probably also your thesis, your paper's main idea. Make this thesis clear. Make it specific. Make it confident. Take a stand. Don't just say that you're going to "explore the links between upward mobility and a few characters in the novel." Tell us what you can show us, now that you've already explored the theme. Don't be afraid to lay it out baldly, even if it means being this direct: "In this paper I argue that, by linking ideas of upward mobility with ideas of violence, and by punishing those who would rise in Parisian society, Balzac's novel *Père Goriot* critiques social

climbing and social climbers.” Your audience now knows exactly what you’ll talk about, and why you’ll say it matters to a reading of the novel.

### C. Support paragraphs

The paragraph is a technology developed over millennia to package one important point supported by a few persuasive moments of close reading or argument to develop that point. Ask yourself, as you move through your supporting paragraphs, which main point each paragraph is making. If you can’t answer that question—the question of what each paragraph contributes to the movement of your argument—then a reader will likely not be able to answer it either. And when you lose your reader, you’ve lost your case. The main point or goal of each paragraph can be most effective if it is the leading sentence of the paragraph, the claim that all that follows will enrich and bolster. Think of it as a miniature thesis statement. If your main idea doesn’t get expressed until the end, you are basically asking your reader to walk through your examples and analysis without knowing which argument those examples and analysis are meant to support. In other words, you’re making your reader work harder than you probably want to.

A good rule of thumb is that a paragraph’s topic sentence or first sentence could/should do three things: 1) transition from the previous paragraph; 2) make a claim that will be supported by the discussion of the text you are about to do; and 3) link the audience to your paper’s main thesis, so that they are reminded of what your larger argument is, and why this present paragraph matters to it.

- 1) Transitions: These can be overt (“however,” “furthermore,” “on the other hand,” etc.). But they can also be subtle, because really the purpose of a transition is to create a relationship between the paragraph you’ve just left and the one you’re just beginning. Even using words like “also,” or pronouns with antecedents in the previous paragraph, like “this” or “these,” will tell your reader that you’re building on the previous paragraph’s points. For example, as you enter a new paragraph, you begin, “Balzac’s narrator also uses battle imagery when describing upward mobility.” Or “This also occurs through the linking of battle imagery and upward mobility.” That one word, “also,” and that word “this,” create a bridge between the previous paragraph and the new one. This is what gives a paper “flow”; your audience is carried along smoothly from one point to the next, and they don’t have to stop and ask how the new point relates to the first one, in your argument.
- 2) Make a Claim: This is your paper, so argue it. Make the first sentence one that can be supported with your discussion of the text and of other critics. Avoid beginning paragraphs with an un-introduced quote; when you do this, you hand your argument over to another person. State your claim first, and then bring in that quote, so that it can

support your claim and help develop it. Think twice, too, about beginning a support paragraph with a moment of summary. Consider the difference between these two sentences: 1) “Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* begins on a boat.” 2) “The settings of Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* consistently create bleak and chilling moods. For example...” The first sentence gives us nothing that the book doesn’t. The second give us a claim, and you can immediately follow that claim by jumping into the text in order to support the claim.

- 3) Links to Your Thesis: These help to keep your audience’s eye on the main argument throughout your paper, and they don’t have to be mind-numbingly repetitive re-statements of your thesis. For one thing, the English language is rich; you can come up with lots of different phrasings of your argument to bring up in your support paragraphs. Yet it’s also true that reminding your audience of the main thesis of your paper can be done with great subtlety.

Let’s recall our working hypothesis from above: “By using the vocabulary of violence and imperialism to describe upward mobility in *Père Goriot*, and by showing the horrible fates of upwardly-mobile characters like Goriot and Anastasie, Balzac asks his reader to be critical of those who would climb the social ladder and of social climbing in general.” Then let’s say that, in your paragraph on Anastasie, you begin by writing, “The upwardly-mobile Anastasie does not fare well, either, and this contributes to the novel’s apparent critique.” In a brief sentence, you have 1) transitioned from the previous paragraph through the word “either,” which links us to the previous paragraph, on Goriot; 2) made a claim, i.e. that Anastasie serves as a negative example of upward mobility; and 3) reminded your audience of the main argument in your paper, which is that Balzac’s novel in general criticizes social climbing.

Be attentive, too, to moments of possible connective thought between and across paragraphs. Does something you’re arguing about Anastasie’s upward mobility relate to that of Goriot? Mention it. This might be the start of seeing a larger pattern, and it might further allow you to show your audience that there is something consistent and systematic in Balzac’s larger picture of Paris. If the goal of a critic/scholar is to point to some interesting coherence in a text, to tell us maybe what the text means (or, in the case of some avant-garde authors, to show the purpose or significance of incoherence), then all of these possible patterns might be useful.

### ***Step 6: Once Again, With Feeling***

In “Little Gidding,” T.S. Eliot writes: “We shall not cease from exploration,/and the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started/and know the place for the first time.”

A professor of mine in college told me that the introductory paragraphs should be the first thing we start writing and the last thing we finish. We need a beginning, so that we have a working plan as we move through the paper. By the end of our paper, however, we may have strayed a bit from our original *working* hypothesis. Because our introduction is meant to introduce what follows, we’ll need to re-work it to make sure that it ably and accurately announces what we’ve actually done, not what we thought we would do way back when we wrote the intro. We may also have better perspective on our argument now, and thus a better awareness of how to prepare a reader for that argument with a clear introduction.

This introduction should be specific. It should tell your audience exactly what you will show them, not give them vague, teasing phrases or allusions to a concrete argument that they’ll get in your conclusion. If your audience doesn’t know exactly what your case is from the start, they will have trouble seeing the significance of the reading you present to them, and this will make them work harder, to see how it all fits together. If your paper focuses on a few key texts or authors, mention them specifically, early on.

### ***Step 7: Give It a Name***

Your title can be clever or straightforward—that's totally up to you, the author—but it should, at the very least, give us an indication of what the paper is about. If you are focusing on a particular author, name her or him in the title. If you are focusing on one or two texts, consider naming them and their authors in the title. If, by the end of your introduction, your reader should have a thumbnail sketch of your larger argument, then your reader should similarly be able to glean from the title a sense of the paper's main interests.

This doesn't mean you can't make your title clever or unique; some of the most entertaining ones are.

### ***Step 8: Document Your Sources***

The list of Works Cited tells your audience where they can find the sources you have quoted in the body of your paper. Basic formatting guidelines can be found here: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/> The purpose of this list is two-fold. First, it serves as a resource to your reader, should they wish to peruse your sources in order to further their own work or research, or to check your claims against the evidence you've provided by consulting those sources. Second, it allows you to give credit where it's due for the ideas and language of others that you may have incorporated into your paper.

And remember that it is your obligation to keep track of and cite all of the sources of your ideas. If you are perusing the internet and see something interesting, keep track of where you saw it, and then cite that page in your paper. The difference between research and plagiarism is citing your sources.

\*\*Sample Annotated Bibliography\*\*

Name  
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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Philanthropy and Great Expectations

Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974. Print.

I read only the chapter “Dickens, David and Pip” (28-62). After an initial exploration of the comparisons/contrasts of the protagonist in *David Copperfield* to the life of Dickens, Buckley concludes that by the time Dickens wrote *Great Expectations* (10 years later) his development of Pip reflected a drastically different protagonist from David, one that is closer to the author himself. Buckley then details an analysis of Pip with striking comparisons to Dickens’ own life. This chapter shows the precision of Pip’s character development: from his innocence and naiveté, driven from “Eden” by his great expectations; his corruption in the city where his hopes prove delusions; and the utter loss of material wealth and recovery of his integrity. Buckley gives great attention to the symbolic use of hands throughout the novel (Mrs. Joe, Estella, Magwitch, Biddy, Miss Havisham and Jaggers). Though Dickens was unaware of the bildungsroman, he incorporated the essential ingredients in both *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* but in opposite fashion. Pip is an orphan, travels to the city, is corrupted by money, is filled with shame and dedicated to improving himself which leads to pride. Buckley concludes with fascinating attention to the abiding sense of guilt that stems from the pledge of secrecy when Pip aided the criminal in his childhood. Because of this initial act, Pip becomes an accomplice and begins a career in which he ultimately finds himself “encompassed by all this taint of prison and crime” (61). He argues that Orlick, as Pip’s double, is the agent to carry out Pip’s subconscious wishes and gives greater reason for Pip’s experiences of guilt throughout the novel.

Feingold, Mordecai. “Philanthropy, Pomp, and Patronage: Historical Reflections upon the Endowment of Culture.” *Daedalus* 16.1 (1987): 155-178. Print.

Mordecai Feingold begins this article recognizing the few studies on the evolution of philanthropy. He claims that this issue defies moral categorization. His intent is to establish a non-partisan historical framework to view the phenomenon of philanthropy with a focus on the motives and ideologies. The distinction he gives is that philanthropy is charity, support of the less fortunate, while patronage is the support of high culture. Charity, he asserts, finds its foundation in the Bible based on both a fear of God and a societal duty. After the Reformation, a dramatic shift occurs in motive to the secular—the elimination of poverty and desire for societal reform. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, poverty was viewed as a disease in need of treatment by society. Benefaction was seen as bestowing greater good on the benefactor than on the beneficiary. Piety, based on indifference to the poor, became the mother of philanthropy. With the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the religion of humanity changes the motive once more to love, duty and justice. Philanthropy combines the religious and ethical worlds; patronage becomes a matter of choice rather than obligation. Feingold demonstrates that in scrutinizing motives in this discussion of

philanthropy and patronage, his goal is to credit human nature and the historical process with much complexity. He concludes that most critics agree that “any action resulting in the relief or happiness of another is meritorious, regardless of its motives” (172).

Houston, Gail Turley. “‘Pip’ and ‘Property’: the Re (Production) of the Self in *Great Expectations*.” *Studies in the Novel* 24.1 (1992): 13-26. Print.

This article focuses on how the two forces of production and reproduction influence the “making” of Pip in *Great Expectations*. In this second attempt by Dickens of a fictional autobiography, Houston argues that the hero and heroine are both “constructed”—made economically (14). Because of Pip’s lack of maternal nurture, his identity is largely shaped by economics. Thus he falls from the sphere of reproduction (female) into the realm of production (male) and is destined to become associated with property, one way or another. Pip essentially *becomes* property as much as inheriting it. Discussion follows regarding what it meant to be brought up “by hand” as contrasted with Herbert’s continual “looking about” for something—again the reproduction vs. production mode. Houston shows how Pip is vulnerable because he has fallen into the world of production and consumption; he is not born, he is made. This cannibalistic metaphor (in much of Dickens’s novels) is often seen whenever the protagonist is abandoned or betrayed by his mother. Thus, Pip learns either to consume or be consumed. The two extreme states of gluttony and starvation are seen as motives for Pip’s complicated, sometimes revengeful behavior. He is both innocent and guilty, victim and “wolf” (22). In the end, Houston asserts that it is Joe who has made him, or rather reproduced him, in that he acts as both nurse and mother to Pip. Houston has trouble with Dickens’s ending of this novel because Dickens affirms what he also reviles in a consumer society: the necessity for the powerless to underwrite the powerful.

Moynahan, Julian. “The Hero’s Guilt: The Case of *Great Expectations*.” *Essays in Criticism* 10 (1960): 60-79. Print.

Moynahan begins this essay raising the issue of Pip’s guilt of snobbery and ingratitude, making comparisons to murder in that they are both offenses against persons rather than property. This line of thinking then progresses to a study of the close association Pip develops with the “taint of criminality” throughout the novel, hinting that Pip as hero is somewhat entrapped by his association with guilt more than his actual behavior (63). Moynahan disagrees with the metaphysical readings of *Great Expectations* by G.R. Strange and Dorothy Van Ghent, that there is a universal guilt in the world of the novel. Instead, Moynahan shows that evidence is not clear for this interpretation. Instead, Moynahan suggests a strong comparison of Pip and Orlick as mirror images in their respective journeys of great expectations. In the confrontation at the lime-kiln the innocent figure (Pip) is made the accused and the guilty one the accuser. The question is raised, “Is Orlick merely projecting his own qualities on Pip or do Orlick’s accusations give even a partial valid comment on Pip’s actions?” (73) The answer to this comes as Moynahan explores the fantasy element of *Great Expectations* which is borne out of a desire for power and a drive for mother-love. Moynahan concludes with a convincing argument showing that both Drummle and Orlick serve as instruments of vengeance with numerous analogies and linked resemblances belonging to Pip and to his ambitions.

**\*\*Sample Proposal\*\***

Name

Date

Course

**PROPOSAL:** “Violence and Social Climbing in Honoré de Balzac’s *Père Goriot*”

In this paper, I want to examine Honoré de Balzac’s depiction of upward mobility in his novel, *Père Goriot*. It is obviously a major preoccupation of the novel, because the plot focuses on the protagonist Rastignac’s desire to move up in Parisian society. As Brodsky Lacour argues in her article, Rastignac’s quest is motivated both by romantic desire and by his being easily seduced by ideas of money and power in the city, but Balzac’s narrative continually chooses disturbing words to describe this quest. The criminal Vautrin’s parable of the “Chinese mandarin” (109) offers an idea of upward mobility as a zero-sum game; for one person to rise, Vautrin implies, another must suffer. Ginzburg’s essay explores this but does not connect it thoroughly to other moments in the novel that are clearly related. Elsewhere, too, Balzac uses images of violence (the duel with Taillefer, for example) to paint upward mobility in a negative light. Vautrin’s attitude toward slavery (which had already been abolished in the French empire by the time the novel takes place) adds, to the general vocabulary of violence, the more specific idea of imperialism, which is critiqued elsewhere in the novel. In addition, Balzac portrays for us characters who have already attempted upward mobility and failed. In the case of Goriot, he is punished when his daughters turn their backs on him; Anastasie is similarly duped when her husband leaves her bankrupt. By depicting upward mobility as a violent and imperialistic act, and by showing its effects on people who have tried it before, Balzac questions the attempted rise of the protagonist, Rastignac, and shows social mobility to be problematic. In so doing, Balzac suggests a more rigid understanding of social class and of the boundaries between the classes.

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