

# Annotated Bibliography—MLA format

## Sample MLA Annotated Bibliography Entry

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995. Print.

Lamott's book offers honest advice on the nature of a writing life, complete with its insecurities and failures. Taking a humorous approach to the realities of being a writer, the chapters in Lamott's book are wry and anecdotal and offer advice on everything from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. In the process, Lamott includes writing exercises designed to be both productive and fun.

Lamott offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main project seems to be offering the reader a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's own imperfect humanity in the process. Rather than a practical handbook to producing and/or publishing, this text is indispensable because of its honest perspective, its down-to-earth humor, and its encouraging approach.

Chapters in this text could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several of the chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some of the writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. Students should find Lamott's style both engaging and enjoyable.

In the sample annotation above, the writer includes three paragraphs: a summary, an evaluation of the text, and a reflection on its applicability to his/her own research, respectively.

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## Why write an annotated bibliography?

Writing an annotated bibliography exposes you to different authors' perspectives on your topic, equipping you with the knowledge you will need to develop a thesis and write a research paper.

If you were to morph your annotated bibliography into the form of an essay showing the many different authors' perspectives on a topic and how they relate to one another, you would have a literature review. Many college research projects require a literature review, and it often appears as a section toward the beginning of the final written project. Writing an annotated bibliography is excellent preparation for writing a literature review.

Scholars write book-length annotated bibliographies to provide their colleagues in the field with quick information about a great number of sources. Because these bibliographies exist, we can read a hundred one-paragraph summaries rather than trudge through a hundred 20-page articles to find information relevant to our topic.

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