

EXPECTATIONS in ENGLISH ELECTIVES CUNY: HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to English Electives! These are sophomore-level literature classes, intended for those students who have successfully completed their freshman year in English, otherwise known as English 110 and English 111. Electives classes are the most specifically focused English classes offered at Hostos, designed to challenge students to develop a more sophisticated approach to literature, and to afford students greater opportunities to refine the skills they acquired in their freshman courses. Reading this booklet carefully will not only give you a clearer sense of what to expect, but should also help you make the most of your electives level courses.

READING

Good writing depends on well-developed reading skills. A skillful reader is constantly making discoveries in the text. What are the aspects of style, how does a reader make sense of them? What is meant by terms like “voice” and “mood”? How does one get clear and distinct ideas from texts that express ideas in subjective, and often variable ways? This section of the handbook is meant to give students some pointers on reading.

Thinking Line by Line

Reading line by line, slowly and carefully, is the key to good reading skills. The more one becomes aware of the subtle adjustments of language that mark the style of great writers, the better one will understand them, and the more one will get out of reading them.

Writers adapt language to their own purposes. Style determines content, what can and cannot be included; for example, if the story is told from one character's point of view, it will probably be confined to what that character would know. The sound and structure of the language at the level of each individual sentence is appropriate to the writer's purpose. This aspect of style involves the selection of which words to use and the best order in which to use them; setting the overall level of formality and the speed of the story. The style will often reflect the point of the story, even if that point is not stated directly.

Word Choice

The English lexicon contains more words than the complete vocabularies of French and Spanish combined. Given such a profusion of words, there are usually a great many choices available to a writer, which make it possible to fine-tune meaning.

Adjectives:

One may say, for example, that a dress is *red* and leave it at that.

If, however, one were to call a dress *scarlet*, this would add to the idea of redness an idea of intensity, associated with passion.

If the word *crimson* were used instead, while it would also convey the idea of redness, it would add an idea of majesty or importance.

Rust is also red, coupled with an idea of being worn out.

Nouns:

Rage is stronger than *anger*, which in turn is stronger than *irritation*.

Verbs:

One may say that A *hits* B, and get the idea across plainly enough, but to say A *clubs* B, or that A *smashes* B, communicates the same idea more vividly.

Word Order

Ernest Hemingway favored a tightly-condensed style, so that he said everything briefly and simply. A short story consisting of only six words, in a single sentence, is attributed to him:

“For sale, baby shoes, never worn.”

In this single line, we see the importance of word order. If the sentence read, “For sale, never-worn baby shoes” instead, the reader must bend back at the end of the sentence to the phrase “never-worn,” resulting in a moment of uncertainty where clarity and finality are what the author wants, and the story loses force. By saving “never worn” for the end of the phrase, the author allows us to hold the idea of baby shoes in our minds, then apply to them the fact that they were never worn, the most important of the details here, which brings home to us more forcefully the sense of absence and despair that the story is meant to express.

Tone and Mood

As you read, make the effort to slow down and investigate the way in which the author uses language. Ask yourself what the tone of the story is; try to sense its mood. Tone and mood are difficult to describe, but they are commonly produced by the sound of the words, in addition to their meaning. Poetry makes special use of the importance of sound, although sound is not unimportant in prose. For example, in his poem, “The Raven,” Edgar Allan Poe ends every stanza with the sound “-ore,” usually in the word “nevermore.” As the poem is about a man mourning for a dead woman named Lenore, this choice of words keeps the more noticeable of the two syllables of her name repeating throughout “The Raven” in its entirety. The speaker is haunted by thoughts of Lenore, and the sound of her name, like an echo, haunts the poem.

Form Follows Function

Here is an example of a long sentence which not only describes something, but acts out in language the thing being described:

She had learned in her girlhood to fondle and cherish those long sinuous phrases of Chopin, so free, so flexible, so tactile, which begin by reaching out and exploring far outside and away from the direction in which they started, far beyond the point which one might have expected their notes to reach, and which divert themselves in those fantastic by-paths only to return more deliberately - with a more premeditated reprise, with more precision, as on a crystal bowl that reverberates to the point of exquisite agony - to clutch one's heart.

Marcel Proust, a French writer renowned for his very long books and very long sentences, wrote this line in his novel, *Swann's Way*. The sentence is structured to resemble Chopin's music, and is intended to produce, in its way, a similar effect on the reader as the music of Chopin has on the listener. So the sentence, like Chopin's music, is also flexible, meaning that it moves easily from one point to another; it stretches out, not only in length but also in depth of description, leaving the woman, "she," far behind but without ever losing sight of the main subject of the sentence to which she is connected - the effect of Chopin's music. That effect never disappears, because Proust is not only writing about it, he is producing that effect with his writing, and so keeping it always before the reader's eyes. The sentence pauses between dashes to describe the most intense effects, close to the end of the line, just as the music reaches a climax and then, like the music, subsides into a satisfying ending.

Authorial Voice

A skillful reader will look not only at what a writer says, but at the way the writer says it. Authors will adapt his or her style to make it appropriate to whatever subject they may be writing about, just as one just as one might choose to deliver bad news in a soft tone of voice, or happy news in a loud tone.

The term “voice” is generally used to mean whatever it is that makes a particular author’s style distinctly his or her own – a kind of fingerprint. Just as some people have highly characteristic ways of speaking, certain authors have developed unique voices, so that their work is instantly recognizable as their own, even when they are not named. When reading, students should ask themselves – what makes this author’s work different from another’s?

Here is an example. First, read this passage from a short story by Tim O’Brien, called “The Things They Carried.”

The things they carried were largely determined by necessity. Among the necessities or near-necessities were P-38 can openers, pocket knives, heat tabs, wrist watches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets, packets of Kool-Aid, lighters, matches, sewing kits, Military payment Certificates, C rations, and two or three canteens of water ... Henry Dobbins, who was a big man, carried extra rations ... Dave Jensen, who practiced field hygiene, carried a toothbrush, dental floss, and several hotel-size bars of soap he'd stolen on R&R in Sydney, Australia. Ted Lavender, who was scared, carried tranquilizers until he was shot in the head outside the village of Than Khe in mid-April ... they all carried steel helmets that weighed five pounds including the liner and camouflage cover. They carried the standard fatigue jackets and trousers. Very few carried underwear. On their feet they carried jungle boots—2.1 pounds – and Dave Jensen carried three pairs of socks and a can of Dr. Scholl's foot powder as a precaution against trench foot. Until he was shot, Ted Lavender carried six or seven ounces of premium dope, which for him was a necessity.

The prose style is actually a list. Everything is concrete; there is nothing abstract about this description. The list is quite clinical in its delineation, and from it the character of each man is quickly suggested by the things they thought were important to bring along. The very simple sentence structure is broken only twice, with the two parts about Ted Lavender. These breaks in the automatic recitation of material allow the writer to introduce an element of emotional content to his readers. Through the repetition of the word “necessity” which is used three times, twice at the beginning and again at the end, the writer introduces a major theme. By putting the dope last he introduces the idea of a kind of casual drug use among

soldiers that is heavily associated with the war in Viet Nam, and so he emphasizes what it was about the experiences of soldiers in this particular war that made it different from other wars.

Contrast the voice in the passage above with this excerpt from a story by Jorge Luis Borges called "The Library of Babel."

Like all men of the Library, I have traveled in my youth; I have wandered in search of a book, perhaps the catalogue of catalogues; now that my eyes can hardly decipher what I write, I am preparing to die just a few leagues from the hexagon in which I was born. Once I am dead, there will be no lack of pious hands to throw me over the railing; my grave will be the fathomless air; my body will sink endlessly and decay and dissolve in the wind generated by the fall, which is infinite. I say that the Library is unending. The idealists argue that the hexagonal rooms are a necessary form of absolute space or, at least, of our intuition of space. They reason that a triangular or pentagonal room is inconceivable ... Let it suffice now for me to repeat the classic dictum: *The Library is a sphere whose exact center is any one of its hexagons and whose circumference is inaccessible.*

In this passage, though there are a few material things referenced, absolutely nothing is concrete. O'Brien is writing about things, while Borges is writing about ideas. Borges' story is about the way that reading, writing, and thinking on philosophical subjects is always inconclusive, and seems to lead only to more questions, never to certain truths. Since this is the point of his story, he not only tells the reader this, he also shows this to the reader by writing in a way that also only leads to more questions.

What do these texts, apparently so different, have in common? In both, the style, the voice, is made appropriate to the subject matter.

WRITING

There are several things the student of literature, should consider before sitting down to write a formal essay for an electives class. What is the **purpose** in writing the paper? Who will be reading it (what **audience**)? How will the paper be **organized**? What **evidence** should be included? What **language** is appropriate to the task? This section of the Electives Handbook looks particularly at two of the above issues: audience and evidence.

Writing for an Academic Audience

For a formal literary essay where no other audience is specified, your situation is analogous to that of your instructor when she or he writes for the *Times*. Remember that you, the writer, are the “expert”; you have been reading and discussing the novel, poem, story, etc. You are intimately familiar with it. But can you depend on your audience to be? If your audience was simply your writing teacher, the answer would be Yes. *But the formal literary essay should be directed toward a more general audience—one that is not necessarily as familiar with the novel, story, or poem as you are.*

Sometimes your electives teacher will specify the audience for your essays and assignments, whether in the course syllabus or in the instructions for an individual assignment. Particularly in writing-intensive (WI) classes, “low-stakes” (ungraded) assignments will ask you to adopt the persona of a creative writer, or write a letter, or any number of creative approaches. In such cases, the assignment itself will often make explicit who the audience is. For example, you might be asked to write in the voice of Zora Neale Hurston, and write a letter to Richard Wright’s responding to his criticism of Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

But what happens if your instructor does not specify your audience? Is there such a thing as a “default” audience—that is, the audience you write to when no particular audience is specified?

Does this mean you are writing for “the person on the street”? Not exactly. You should assume that your reader is college-educated, or working at obtaining a college education. Your language choice should be formal and academic, but not pretentious. (Your goal here is not to *sound* “intellectual” or “academic,” but to clearly communicate complex, nuanced ideas.) In fact, you might consider your ideal audience member to be a friend or acquaintance who is enrolled in a different English elective. At the same time, however, because this person may never have read the work you’re writing about, or may have read it so long ago they can only vaguely recall it, you have to make sure to present a certain amount of information in order for the reader to be able to follow your ideas without getting confused.

So, does this mean you need to recount the whole story of, say, the novel you are writing about in your essay? Absolutely not! But it does mean that a thumbnail (2-3 sentences) sketch of the plot might be worth including in your introduction; and more important, that in the body of the essay you use summary effectively to help orient your reader in the story or poem, so that they can clearly understand the ideas you want to draw from the text. In this sense, summary serves not only as evidence to persuade your reader, but signposts to help them through the essay.

Using Paraphrase and Analysis Together in an Essay

Quoting, paraphrasing, and then close-reading particularly significant passages from the reading is an important way that a writer can support and explain an analysis of an essay or literary work, and show how the main idea of the essay developed.

Quoting and paraphrasing -- using brief examples of significant passages from the reading, either exactly as written with quotation marks or entirely in your own words without quotation marks -- focus the reader on passages that best support the main idea, and also show the reader how the writer interprets such passages so as to arrive at that idea.

These skills, along with close-reading, are important because a writer of a well-crafted work focuses as much on *how* things are said (form, style, phrasing, and word choice), as *what* is said.

As a result, while drafting an essay, the student will be making choices about when, where, and how to summarize, paraphrase, and quote in order to prove, explain, or illustrate an interpretation of the text. Often, the student will choose to summarize when it is not necessary; the student simply needs to give the reader some general background about the reading in order to be clear. On the other hand, students will sometimes choose to quote or paraphrase when it is necessary to show exactly the words, phrasing, style, or form the writer chose for a particular passage -- and how those choices affect style, and, consequently, meaning.

Consider the example below from this passage from Elizabeth Whatley's "Language Among Black Americans":

The Afro-American experience in the United States has been different from that of any other group, and the language situation of Black Americans is correspondingly different. Unlike other groups who came to America, almost all Africans were brought over as slaves, and up until the Emancipation Proclamation, the overwhelming majority of Blacks in the United States were still slaves. During the period of slavery, as well as in the modern period, the patterns of communication between Blacks and other Americans reflected the social difference between them. Also, the Africans who reached American shores spoke many different African languages and were, on the whole, unable to maintain viable speech communities based on the use of their mother tongues. (570)

Example of paraphrase and analysis: Elizabeth Whatley explains in her essay "Language Among Black Americans" that Africans who worked as slaves in

the United States were left without the communities that support shared language (570). These Africans would have had little contact with others who spoke their mother tongues, and they were therefore forced to adapt to the language of the dominant English-speaking communities in the United States. Whatley further explains that, gradually, they stopped using their mother tongues. Out of these historical experiences, African-Americans developed the variety of English that we know today as "Black English."

Quotation Integration Exercise

What follows is an assignment to train students in the effective use of quotations.

Marriage in Dineson's "The Blue Eyes"

The theme of Isak Dineson's "The Blue Eyes," that trust between a husband and wife [1] must be absolute, is supported by the characters, plot, and symbolism of the story. The characters contrast sharply in their trust for one another [2]. The difference between the skipper and his wife is clearly evident in their conversation about the ship [3]. When the wife says: "You think more of the figurehead than of me" (Dineson 11), she shows that she does not share her husband's vision. For him the figure head - which he has had carved to represent his wife in all details (Dineson 11) - is a mystical thing. It is the most significant aspect of his ship. His feeling and identification of the figurehead with his wife is evident when he says: "She is like you, yes, ... she is you yourself" [4] (Dineson 11). This conversation between the husband and wife reveals the fundamental difference between them and is the origin of the wife's lack of trust. Where the skipper sees beyond common reality his wife only sees the physical reality. This is what separates them [5]. While the husband finds a creative way of trusting his wife - making her image the figure-head on his ship so that she would guide him in all his travels - the wife stays at home and frets, doubting her husband's love because he enjoys his journeys and his ship so much. So while the skipper maintains his devotion to his wife, his wife grows more and more unhappy, resorting to deception to get back at her husband. *The conflict that shapes the plot, then, is caused by the wife's inability to trust her husband's love.** The story ends tragically when the wife suffers for her lack of trust: her husband drowns and she goes blind. Finally, the figure-head itself stands for the ideal love that would have included absolute trust. But it is also a symbol of the guiding force that a loving and trusting spouse can be.

Notes

[1] This is the **THEME** - on which the student writer chooses to focus in this paragraph.

[2] This is the first point that needs to be illustrated.

[3] This sentence is a lead in to the quotation. Here I have explained the situation in the story in which the quotation occurs.

[4] Note that the quotation is not long and uses ellipsis to extract exactly what is significant.

[5] These underlined sentences lead the reader out and away from the quotation. They summarize the significance of the quotation in relation to the point that is being illustrated.

Summary versus Analysis

Summary is description in the student's own words of the plot--the events and ideas as they occur--of an essay, poem, play, short story, or novel. Analysis is explanation of an idea or ideas you have about the text. In analysis, you do not focus on what happens or what speakers or characters say. Instead, you focus on explaining your interpretation of the text--your thoughts about and approaches to the characters, plots, settings, styles, ideas, and themes the writer is using in the text.

Consider the examples below showing summary and analysis of this passage from Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "The Bean Eaters":

They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair.
Dinner is a casual affair.
Plain chipware on a plain and creaking wood,
Tin flatware. (1-4)

Example of summary: Brooks describes two old people eating a dinner of beans. They are poor and have cheap dishes.

Example of analysis: Brooks shows the joy that this old couple feels in sharing their dinner, even if dinner is only beans. The couple think of their meal as if it were a special event, an "affair" similar to a party. By describing the dinner as an "affair," Brooks creates images of fine china and silver forks. However, this couple is having only a "casual affair." Their meal of beans, their old dishes, and their plain wood table show that they are poor. Their description of the meal as a "casual affair" shows that for this couple every meal together is special.

Using Summary and Analysis Together in an Essay about Literature

One of the main traps students fall into when they begin to approach writing essays about texts is to summarize rather than analyze the text under consideration, or to summarize too much and analyze too little. An essay about a text requires the student to do more than simply show familiarity with the text by recounting the main events; that much is assumed by any professor.

That said, summary is useful in an essay about a text. First, it cannot safely be assumed that the reader has read the text under consideration (see the "audience" chapter of this handbook), or that they have read it recently enough to remember it. (The teacher has, but the essay should be addressed to a general audience, not specifically to the teacher.) As such, the summary is useful for grounding a reader in the text, and providing enough context for them to understand an analysis. In addition, and perhaps more important, summary is one means to provide the

evidence on which an analysis is based. In this way, summary doesn't just prevent confusion; it helps persuade the reader that an analysis is valid.

With this in mind, look again at the examples from Brooks's "The Bean Eaters" above. If one had no prior knowledge of the poem, and no summary or quotation to act as a guide, it would be much more difficult to grasp the points the writer makes in the paragraph of analysis presented above. The analysis would therefore be less persuasive.

Instead, one should join summary and analysis, as in this example:

In the first four lines of "The Bean Eaters," Gwendolyn Brooks describes two old people eating a dinner of beans. They are poor and have cheap dishes. And yet, despite their poverty, Brooks shows the joy that this old couple feels in sharing their dinner, even if dinner is only beans. The couple think of their meal as if it were a special event, an "affair" similar to a party. By describing the dinner as an "affair," Brooks creates images of fine china and silver forks. However, this couple is having only a "casual affair." Their meal of beans, their old dishes, and their plain wood table show that they are poor. Their description of the meal as a "casual affair" shows that for this couple every meal together is special.

RESEARCH

Many electives courses will require students to produce research papers, but good research skills are important in other kinds of papers as well. When quoting material from other sources, students must be cautious, and make certain that they follow the formal conventions and formats that have been established for academic papers. These conventions and formats are discussed here.

Secondary Sources

The term ‘secondary sources’ covers a wide range of items, from encyclopedia entries and newspaper articles through the most esoteric and theoretical studies of a text. At the electives level, students are expected to be able to know how to find material that sheds light on the text or texts assigned; the trick is to know, first, how to evaluate such materials, and second, how to use this material in a paper.

Finding Secondary Material

If one is writing about a literary work, chances are that other critics have already published their research on the same text in books or scholarly, peer-reviewed journals, many of which are accessible through databases. The Hostos Library is small but because it is part of CUNY, any book in the CUNY Library Inter-Library System (CLICS) can be found there; any holder of a valid Hostos Library card can borrow books from other CUNY campus libraries (this may take some time – some students prefer to go directly to the other campus library and check the book out in person). While the Hostos College library does not subscribe to all databases, it subscribes to JSTOR, Project Muse and the MLA Literary Resource Center, and so students are able to read these articles online at any time, provided their Hostos Library Cards are up to date (cards must be activated at the circulation desk before they can be used). Students will be able to save these articles as PDF files.

There is a strong tendency to print first and read afterwards, but we strongly advise you to read before printing. Some critics write very theoretically, some use a lot of jargon. Some have snappy titles but don’t say very much. You will need to sift through the articles looking for ideas that relate to your thesis.

Another helpful source of secondary material is Google, but use caution and common sense as anybody can put anything on Google. Also, Google items are arranged according to no particular sequence, and it happens quite frequently that a brilliant item is on the tenth page. This being the case, do not stop searching for material after you have looked at the first page or two. If you are overwhelmed by the number of hits you got when you typed in your keyword—say, “Racism in

Othello”—revise your keywords to get fewer hits and try again. Sometimes professors at other colleges who have used or are using the text you need to write about put their syllabi online and include short bibliographies. Consulting these syllabi may save you a lot of time and give you some great ideas in the process.

Using Secondary Sources

Critics are specialists, and like all specialists, have their technical terms and special ways to express themselves. This language can annoy and intimidate but if you somehow feel that somewhere in that article is an insight, ask your professor or a tutor to help you understand it. Then you will be able to put it into your own words and incorporate it into your paper so that it strengthens or develops your position.

Just because you have read an article or a book by a critic doesn't mean that you have to agree with this scholar's point of view. Feel free to disagree with this person, but remember to refer to h/her respectfully.

Remember that it is **YOUR** voice that your professor is interested in hearing. When you submit a paper with a few references to articles or books, your professor will be happy to see that you have read and consulted secondary material and are learning how to absorb and assimilate the ideas of others. However, he or she does not want to read a paper that is a string of quotations from JSTOR articles.

Speculation versus Analysis

Strong analysis of a well-crafted essay or literary work requires you to look closely at the text, examining what it says, how it says it, and also the range of possible ideas the text asks you to consider when you think about it. In most cases, each text will have a wide range of possible "right" meanings, interpretations that are very different but still relevant to the literary work. However, there are also "wrong" meanings, interpretations that are not especially relevant to the literary work, or even sometimes just not what the writer meant or not reasonably in the range of possible meanings.

Speculation is when you move too far away from what the text says, or lose track of what the range of possible meanings that might relate to that text. Usually, speculation begins to happen when a reader "forgets" what is really in the text in front of him or her and begins to think about what could be in the text (but is not).

Questions that help along analysis can take a variety of forms.

- Consider what motivates a speaker or character to behave or feel or think the way he or she does.
- Consider what the interaction between speakers and characters tells us about the relationships between them.
- Consider the function of a particular event or significant action in the context of the overall essay or story.
- Consider whether a particular element of the text has symbolic value—that is, value beyond its function in the plot.

For example, here is a passage from Raymond Carver's short story "Cathedral," followed by some of the kinds of questions that help along analysis, questions the writer is asking you to think about when reading this short story:

Now this same blind man was coming to sleep in my house. "Maybe I could take him bowling," I said to my wife. She was at the draining board doing scalloped potatoes. She put down the knife she was using and turned around. "If you love me," she said, "you can do this for me. If you don't love me, okay. But if you had a friend, any friend, and the friend came to visit, I'd make him feel comfortable." She wiped her hands with the dish towel. "I don't have any blind friends," I said. "You don't have any friends," she said.

(Raymond Carver's "Cathedral")

Questions that help along analysis might be: Why is the narrator unhappy at the idea of a blind man sleeping in his house? Why is the narrator saying he could

take the visitor bowling when it probably wouldn't be reasonable to expect a blind person to like bowling since it depends quite a lot on being able to see? Why does the wife tell the narrator that he doesn't have any friends? If what the wife says is true, then why might the narrator have no friends? Don't people like him? Doesn't he leave the house and meet people? Would I like this narrator?

Speculative questions, as with analytic questions, also take a variety of forms. In order to ask analytic questions and avoid speculative questions:

- Don't try to apply the essay, story, or poem to incidents and feelings in your own life (think about it ... the authors have never met you ... have they?), rather than to the text.
- Don't address “big issues” about the meaning of life, death, love, and so on, rather than the events of the text.
- Don't make assertions about a character's life or about events for which there is little or no textual evidence. (Remember, it's not your writing, but the author's.)

Examples of questions that lead to speculation, questions the writer is not asking you to think about when you are reading the above passage from Raymond Carver's short story "Cathedral" might be: How did the visitor become blind? Does the narrator like bowling? Why is the wife making scalloped potatoes? Should spouses be willing to let each other's friends visit any time they wish? Why is it important to have friends? Do I have many friends? Why don't I have any blind friends? Would I like to have a blind friend?

You may have looked over these questions and thought to yourself, “But what if I think those scalloped potatoes are ... *more than just scalloped potatoes?*” Indeed, they may be. Determining what serves as a symbol is one of the most difficult aspects of becoming a good reader, and depends on all sorts of cultural and academic clues. For example, your instructor might point to the particularly intellectual or literary movement into which Carver's story fits (minimalism), and that movement's tendency to embrace or avoid symbolism. Or, he or she might note that the scalloped potatoes never return in the story, so the author isn't really calling attention to them. Or, he or she might argue that, unlike crosses and yellow ribbons, “scalloped potatoes” do not have a long history of being used as a conventional symbol.

Quoting Secondary Sources

Quote from readings when the passage says exactly what you need. Select only the part of the passage that is necessary in order to make your point. At times, this means omitting extra words using an ellipsis [. . .] to show readers that words are cut out of the passage.

All quotations must be indicated in some way, either by quotation marks, or by block quote format. Quotation marks should be placed around shorter quotes. Longer quotes, of five or more lines, should be placed in block quote (no quotation marks and a one inch indent) format.

Example of block quote format:

Latina writers have often been left out of American literary programs. Bridget Kevane describes the results of her search of the American Studies Association program list: "much to my surprise, there was very little in the programs I perused that used Latina literature in any capacity, let alone history, as part of a core component to interdisciplinary syllabi" (97). As Kevane says, this absence of Latina voices in American literature programs omits a crucial chunk of literature that shows what it means to be "American" and a writer:

The literature of Latina writers, like other ethnic literatures, examines in very commanding and provocative ways the construction of identity in the American context. These writers, like other ethnic writers, speak of what it is like to grow up bicultural and bilingual, to mourn the loss of a national identity, to celebrate a new hybridity, to return to the homeland as an outsider or to live in the US on cultural borders. If one purpose of American Studies is to examine conflicting views of what America is, then these authors offer what should be considered a vigorous discussion about what it means to be a Latina American woman of color, without a static identity, who writes in English and Spanish in the United States. (97)

Works Cited Pages/ MLA Style

Every researched essay must have a works cited page, which supplies all information about any sources that have been quoted in the paper.

Let's say you found this article using the JSTOR database on the Hostos Library webpage under "Find Articles."

The Hispanic Absence in the North American Literary Canon

- Author(s): Bridget Kevane
- Source: *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Part 1: Power in America: Nationhood and Ethnicity (Apr., 2001), pp. 95-109
- Published by: Cambridge University Press

This is an article in a scholarly journal which you found using an subscription database, because JSTOR is a database to which the Hostos Library subscribes.

Works Cited

Kevane, Bridget. "The Hispanic Absence in the North American Literary Canon."
[Journal of American Studies](#) 35.1 (Apr. 2001): 95-109. Part 1: Power in
America: Nationhood and Ethnicity. *JSTOR*. Web. 7 December 2010