Chapter 9: The Research Paper

Although analysis is a crucial phase in writing about any subject, the next step of contributing to society’s knowledge and understanding is to participate in the *scholarly dialogue* on the subject. This point can be clarified by comparing a biology lab report with a scholarly scientific article. During the lab experiment, the scientist might examine a cancer cell, for example, after it has been treated with a particular substance. This first-hand (or primary) research is necessary to discovering whether the substance will have the desired effect on the cell. However, what if other scientists have tested this same substance on cancer cells previously? The results of your experiment do not exist in a vacuum. Chances are that you chose this substance for testing because, in your reading of existing scholarship, you learned which other substances have already been tried and what the outcomes of those experiments were. In testing this substance, you and your team may have altered the conditions of the experiment a bit to see if, under slightly different circumstances, the substance will act differently than it has in previous experiments. As the research is refined, and scientists continue to communicate their discoveries to each other and to the world, the body of knowledge on the subject grows and deepens. As a result of this “team” effort, human understanding expands. The dialogue among scholars, conveyed through academic articles and books, is a crucial resource for any researcher.

While it might be a bit intimidating to enter this dialogue as a college freshman, one must start somewhere! Certainly, you may feel strange disagreeing with something an expert in the field has said about your subject, but participating in this dialogue becomes easier with practice. One can disagree with a scholar while maintaining a tone respectful of that scholar’s credentials and experience. After all, we are grateful for the groundwork our predecessors have laid for our own studies. However, things change, and with the benefit of hindsight, as well as of new technologies and new discoveries, your generation will undoubtedly further human understanding. You are encouraged to take up the mantle with curiosity and determination.

# Getting a Handle on Academic Research

Likely born in the Information Age, you are probably quite adept at researching on the internet for information you use in your daily life. From finding a replacement screen for your broken cell phone to determining who wrote the terrific song you heard yesterday on the radio, you probably find it fairly easy to track down certain kinds of information. However, most students find it challenging to navigate university library search tools to find an academic article for a class project. Why the difference?

First, because academic search engines do not turn a profit as Google and Yahoo do, refinement of these systems happens at a much slower pace. If you type “tamixifen” into the Google search bar, you will be asked if you meant to search for “tamoxifen,” and you’ll be presented with a list of sources on that correctly spelled topic. Conversely, if you type “tamixifen” into your college library’s science index search bar, you’ll get a message that there are “no matches” for your search—a dead end. This is an example of the sophistication of commercial search engines as compared with academic ones. It may seem odd that scholars of today use substandard tools, but this is an effect of the differing economic models used by the for-profit and not-for-profit realms. In doing your research, you might be tempted just to revert to the Google search instead of struggling with Academic Search Complete. However, if you do so, you will find that publications on the most cutting edge research in your field cannot be accessed through Google. Academic journals usually require a paid subscription for anyone seeking to read their articles. Scholarly books recently published will not be distributed free of charge on the internet. The authors and publishers of these works function with a production model that requires funding but, for important ideological reasons, does not depend on advertising for that support, and thus access to these academic sources is limited. The chart in Chapter 3 will help you distinguish between **popular sources**, like those most often found on Google, and **scholarly sources** like those found in your college library.

Perhaps the most distinctive factor of the scholarly article or book is the peer-review process it must undergo before being accepted for publication. Through this process, the professionals of each discipline uphold its standards to ensure that the body of research in that field is truly expanding and is maintained at a high quality.

With these points in mind, let’s consider the best ways for finding up- to-date scholarly resources for your academic research paper. As a student enrolled in a college or university, you have likely paid fees that give you access to your library’s holdings. These include the many books (both physical and digital) that your library has purchased as well as subscriptions to academic journals in a multitude of fields. Consider the example of Rebekah Fish’s poetry research paper assignment. She has chosen for her topic the poem “The Hunting of the Hare” by Margaret Cavendish.

On the advice of her instructor, Rebekah goes to her college library’s web page and clicks on MLA International Bibliography. In looking at the other indexes available, she can see that there are indexes dedicated to research in biology, art, education, business, the medical fields, and many other disciplines. She makes a mental note in case she needs to use one of these for an assignment in another class.

In MLA, she types “The Hunting of the Hare” into the search bar, and under “Select a Field” she clicks on “subjects.” She clicks on “Search,” and soon the tool yields a list of article and book titles. Not all of these titles indicate a focus specifically on the poem she has chosen to write about—it appears that some articles simply include a paragraph or two on the poem. But Rebekah does not rule out these sources. Her professor has advised the class to *start narrow* and *then broaden* their search as necessary. Since Rebekah has found only a few sources written specifically on this poem, she does a new search on the poet, and again selects “subjects” as the field since she is not currently interested in finding works written *by* this poet. After printing the resulting list of articles, to go just a bit broader, Rebekah finds the web page listing the library’s book holdings. Rebekah types “seventeenth century women poets” into the search bar, and finds two helpful book titles: *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile*, by Emma L.E. Rees, and *Reading Early Modern Women’s Writing*, by Paul Salzman.

Now that Rebekah has a good list of possible resources, she begins tracking them down and reading them. She makes notes about the focus of each work in case she needs to consider any of them again later. As she reviews her list, she puts a star next to the most promising articles and books. She needs five secondary sources for this project, and there is no use trying to force into her essay sources that do not match her focus. She picks those that will be most helpful to her as she defines and develops her argument.

# Thesis Revisited

Although Rebekah has had in mind a working thesis shaping the argument for this paper, she now revisits this thesis. Having read several intriguing interpretations of the poem during her research, she works to refine her own thesis to reflect its unique angle on the subject. Now that she has a better sense of what her own argument will contribute to the general dialogue on “The Hunting of the Hare,” she works on her paper outline, considering where her discussion of each selected secondary source will fit best.

# Integrating Research into Your Own Arguments

Striving to establish her own perspective on the poem, to say something original rather than simply reporting what other scholars have said, Rebekah works to keep her own voice dominant in the essay. While she incorporates paraphrase, summary, and quotes from her secondary sources, she is careful that the majority of the essay’s words are her own and that she does not allow the critics to speak *for* her. To clarify whose ideas are whose, she employs **tag words and phrases**, such as “according to,” “Smith argues,” “Smith claims,” and “contrary to Smith’s position on this point, Jones argues….” These tag words guide Rebekah’s readers through the variety of perspectives to a clear view of *Rebekah’s* argument. Further, she is careful to cite all references within the paper and to include a bibliography at the end of the essay listing every source she has mentioned in the paper.

It is important to note that because Rebekah’s subject is the poem, she must draw from the poem itself for her primary evidence. Thus, *quoting* from the primary text is not only helpful, but necessary. While she works to control the discussion with her own voice, she enriches the texture of the essay by pulling in important lines of the poem at key moments in her argument. Not only do they serve to support her major points, but they also generate a poetic quality in the essay itself, bringing the poem to life for readers.

# Documentation

Several major *documentation styles* can be employed for academic projects, each style common to certain disciplines. In the past, you may have employed MLA style in your own English papers. MLA, maintained by the Modern Language Association, is generally used for writing in the humanities, particularly on language and literature topics. However, it is important to be aware of the other major styles for use in projects in other areas. APA (established and maintained by the American Psychological Association) is usually used for writing in the social sciences. Chicago Manual Style (or CMS) is often used in the field of history, though it is employed by various publications across the humanities. CSE, established and maintained by the Council of Science Editors, is employed in biology and other sciences. As a student moving among the disciplines, keep in mind that *conventions vary among fields*. You can find guidelines for each of these documentation styles online at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/. Below is a list of the basic rules for MLA documentation style to guide you as you compose your literary research paper.

## 9.4.1 In-Text Citations

A common way to cite your in-text sources is *parenthetically*, as in the following example:

Jake participates in “gossip” about his peers’ activities (Adair 114) perhaps as a means to get revenge for their engagement in intimacy, which he cannot enjoy.

Here, the writer includes the last name of the article’s author and the page number from which the information or concept comes. The writer might alternatively *mention* the author and then in parenthesis include only the page number:

Jake participates in “gossip” about his peers’ activities, as Adair notes, perhaps as a means to get revenge for their engagement in intimacy which he cannot enjoy (114).

MLA emphasizes the avoidance of footnotes and endnotes unless absolutely necessary. Consequently, we have omitted footnote and endnote formating information. Please refer to the latest MLA guide for futher information regarding proper formatting: https://style.mla.org/2016/02/29/ using-notes-in-mla-style/.

### Subsequent References:

After you provide a full “note” on a source in your paper, if you refer to that source again, you do not need to provide the full “note” again. Instead, include just the author’s name (or the work’s title, if there is no author) and the page number(s) being referenced, as demonstrated below:

Adair 116.

## 9.4.2 Work Cited Page

You will likely need to provide a Bibliography, or Works Cited page, in addition to footnotes or endnotes; such a list will certainly be required if you have employed parenthetical notes. These entries require a somewhat different format than the footnotes/endnotes, so pay close attention to the differences. For the Works Cited Page, arrange the entries for your sources *in alphabetical order* according to the *authors’ last names*, or if there is no author listed, by the article title’s first word. List authors by last name first. Also, note that unlike in a paragraph or a footnote, which indents the first line and brings the rest of the text back to the margin, a bibliography entry does exactly the opposite!

### Print Journal Article:

Author’s last name, first name. “Article Title.” *Journal Title,* vol. number, issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers of entire article.

William, Adair. “Ernest Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises: The Novel as Gossip.” *The Hemingway Review*, vol. 3, no.1, Spring 2012, pp. 114-118.

### Journal Article from an Electronic Database:

Author’s last name, first name. “Article Title.” *Journal Title*, vol. number, issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers if available. *Database from which the article was retrieved (such as JSTOR)*. DOI or URL. Date on which it was retrieved.

Adair, William. “Ernest Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises: The Novel as Gossip.” *The Hemingway Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 2012, pp. 114-118. *ProQu*est. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1022331888/>

abstract/D8BB688BB6264584PQ/2?accountid=159965. Accessed 28 Feb. 2013.

### Book:

Author’s last name, first name. *Title of the Book*. Publisher, Date of Publication, page numbers used if applicable.

Boehrer, Bruce Thomas. *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2010, pp. 32-3.

### A Work in an Anthology:

Author’s Last Name, and First Name. “Work Title.” *Anthology Title*, Editor’s Name, Publisher, Date of Publication, Page numbers on which the work appears.

Locke, Alain. “The New Negro.” *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, W.W. Norton, 1997, pp. 961-970.

### Article from Online Reference Book (no author):

“Article Title.” Publication title. *Website*, Date posted, URL address. Date accessed.

“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1954.” *Nobelprize.org*, 2014, <https://www>.nobelprize.org/nobel\_prizes/literature/laureates/1954/. Accessed 30 July 2014.

# Sample Student Paper

Rebekah’s research essay on Margaret Cavendish’s poem “The Hunting of the Hare” illustrates several of the principles discussed in this chapter:

* How to integrate scholarly secondary sources without relinquishing control of the argument
* How to make it clear whose ideas are whose through use of tag words and phrases
* How to employ parenthetical in-text citations according to MLA guidelines
* How to construct a Works Cited page according to MLA guidelines

Rebekah Fish

English 3460

Human Nature in Margaret Cavendish’s “The Hunting of the Hare”

Margaret Cavendish’s 1653 poem “The Hunting of the Hare” relates the cruel fate of a hare that has fallen prey to a group of hunters. A study of this poem suggests that Cavendish can be viewed as one of the first supporters for animal rights as she criticizes the cruelty of men who kill animals for sport. On a more personal level, Cavendish could have closely identified with the hare, which is ostensibly humanlike, and also with its fear. She might have even intended to parallel her critics to the dogs and the hunters within the poem. On a grander scale, Cavendish might be making the critical judgment that humankind seeks enjoyment through violent competition with others. Through a study of the many different thematic levels of the poem, Margaret Cavendish’s “The Hunting of the Hare” seems to have an overarching theme of humanity’s destructive attraction to violence in order to achieve supremacy.

It is evident through the poet’s portrayal of the hare that it is meant to be seen as a significant and even a symbolic figure, beginning in the first line of the poem where the hare is granted the name “Wat.” He is humanlike, “glaring” across the landscape as his “Haires blew up behind” him in the wind instead of his fur (4 and 6). The hare is also described as “wise” instead of merely being a sentient creature, and Cavendish makes its humanlike features even more evident as the hare “walks about” rather than hopping or crawling (Cavendish 7 and 11). Another way the rabbit is seemingly anthropomorphized is through the continual use of the personal pronoun “him” in the poem, which is used instead of “it.” To indicate her disapproval of the unethical treatment of all animals, near the very end of the poem Cavendish grants all creatures the same humanlike quality as the hare by saying that creatures are being “murdered” (100) by men instead of “killed.” The word “murder” connotes unlawfulness and makes a connection between that illicitness and the killing of animals, indicating that all sentient life, that of humans and animals, is important and worthy of being preserved. Some may even argue that Cavendish was trying to make a point that humankind should not express dominant authority over other creatures through use of violence, because within the last lines of the poem, man is portrayed not only as murderous, but also as an oppressive tyrant that rules over all other living creatures.

Cavendish’s humanlike portrayal of the hare might raise concerns for some readers. Bruce Thomas Boehrer discusses some critics’ objection to an author’s anthropomorphizing nonhuman characters. To anthropomorphize is to project one’s own tendencies and traits onto another species. Some critics argue that this act ignores a nonhuman species’ real behaviors and traits and illustrates humans’ feeling of dominance over nature. However, as Boehrer explains, many animal characters in literature “challenge the human-animal divide” (5) and force people to examine their values, especially those related to nature. Donna Landry supports the view that “The Hunting of the Hare” raises these issues. She argues that in Cavendish’s work, she promotes the “democratizing of relations between humans and other species” (471). Rather than emphasizing the superiority of human emotions by anthropomorphizing the hare, Cavendish humanizes him in order to bridge the gap between the reader and the hare. Paul Salzman states that Cavendish’s main goal as a writer was “to enter into an empathetic relationship with the world around her” (142). In “The Hunting of the Hare,” Cavendish portrays the hare with empathy in order to persuade the reader that committing unnecessary violence on animals is cruel and terrible.

In addition, the description of the hare is used to form and emphasize the strong connection between the hare and Cavendish, who was similarly being pursued by her critics as a female writer. This criticism is clearly shown through the description of Cavendish by Mary Evelyn, who portrayed her as extravagant and vain and said that her discourse was “as airy, empty, whimsical, and rambling as her books” (Qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 2058-9). Many people of Cavendish’s time viewed her as outrageous, partly because publicly recognized women writers were rare during the seventeenth century. Although scholars seriously study Cavendish’s work now, Emma L.E. Rees says that because of the harsh critics of her time, “The impression which lasted for many years was of an eccentric, disturbed and arrogant woman” (11). “The Hunting of the Hare” could be interpreted as a response to this criticism. Her critics, paralleled by both the “cruel dogs” (16) and the men in the poem, are often referred to as merciless. The critics are described as nosy through common references to the dogs and how they always “thrust [their] snuffling nose[s]” into things (64). They are also described as loudmouths through the image of the dogs who cry out with their “wide mouths” (19). While at times Cavendish seems to be uncaring as to what the critics say about her, at other times she seems terrified of the public’s opinion of her life and writing, much like the hare’s terror of being pursued. She suggests that in public, she hides her fear of the critics, similarly to the hare when, “Licking his feet, he wiped his ears so clean / That none could tell that Wat had hunted been” (41-2). Although the critics continued to pursue her, Cavendish emphasizes through the poem that she will continue to maintain her composure until the very end, like the hare does until his death. Yet, this continual pursuing and killing of hares, which parallels Cavendish’s experience, critiques human nature’s desire for supremacy over all living things—even each other.

Not only can Cavendish’s poem be seen as a response to the cruelty to animals and the cruelty of the critics, but it can also be seen as an assessment of how humankind treats its brethren. In the poem, the men are portrayed as bloodthirsty monsters that thrive off cruelty to others. The men in Cavendish’s poem, who “destroy those lives that God did make” (98) solely for “sport or recreation’s sake” (97), seek to kill the rabbit, the symbol, through heavy personification, of a fellow human (Cavendish 2062).

To conclude, Margaret Cavendish’s “The Hunting of the Hare” is a comment on human nature and the desire for obtaining dominion over others by any means necessary. Through her extensive use of pathos throughout the poem, her audience was meant to feel a sense of culpability and a desire to change. Despite her portrayal of human nature as inherently evil, the guilt the audience is supposed to feel offers a sense of hope, as it indicates that human nature is capable of being altered and even changed.

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# Research Paper Checklist

When you write an academic research paper, there are so many factors to keep in mind that it can become overwhelming. Often, students finish an assignment like this having overlooked an important requirement or two. This chapter closes with The Research Paper Checklist below, intended to help you double-check your paper before you make the final submission.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Check if Completed** |
| Asserts a clear and interesting thesis that controls the entire essay |  |
| Opens with an engaging and effective introduction, which provides background on the topic and writer’s position |  |
| Is clearly and effectively organized |  |
| Employs clear and engaging prose (prose that is not riddled with grammatical errors or awkward constructions) |  |
| Provides transitions and explanations that help reveal relationships between ideas (develops coherence) |  |
| Provides adequate evidence to prove the writer’s point (asserted by thesis) |  |
| Effectively integrates outside sources, providing internal documentation according to appropriate documentation style |  |
| Uses tag phrases (such as “according to Smith,” “Smith argues,” etc.) to indicate whose ideas are whose |  |
| Incorporates minimal number of scholarly sources in the essay according to the professor’s instructions |  |
| Avoids plagiarism by |  |
| indicating all quoted material (even short bits) with quotation  marks and in-text source information and |
| providing in-text source information for all paraphrased and  summarized material |
| Wraps up with a conclusion that effectively reiterates the point and/or urges the reader to action or change of perspective |  |
| In Works Cited section, lists only sources that are mentioned in the essay |  |
| In Works Cited section, lists all sources that are mentioned in the essay |  |
| Follows field-appropriate documentation guidelines for Works Cited entries |  |