

How to Use JSTOR to Start Your Literary Research

➤ From the Bucks County Community College homepage (www.bucks.edu):

1. Slide your mouse over “Library” and select “Start your Research” from the drop-down menu.
2. Click on “Databases,” which is under the heading “Online Resources.”
3. Scroll down and click on the link to JSTOR.

* **Note:** On an off-campus computer you will need to log on using your student i.d. and password to access JSTOR. Alternatively, from a campus computer, you may navigate directly to <http://www.jstor.org/search/>.

The benefit of using JSTOR is that it will ensure your resources are *peer-reviewed journals!* JSTOR has done the job already of editing your search for reputable, scholarly sources—this is what is missing if you conduct a Google search. In addition to JSTOR, the Bucks library offers other resource materials and databases for literary research, for instance, Literature Online Reference Edition (LION), which can be accessed from the Bucks homepage by following steps 1-3 above.

➤ Depending on your topic, you may have to broaden or narrow your initial **search terms**, try different search terms, or even revise your topic, based on the research available. (You might also try researching other databases and resources, such as LION or the MLA Bibliography.)

- Consider brainstorming a list of phrases and terms associated with your topic before you begin a search.
- Be flexible and play around with search terms until you get your search results down to a manageable number of sources to sift through. For example, if you begin your search with the terms “Mark Twain” and “racism,” you will turn up 314 „hits.“ On the other hand, if you play around and refine your search terms a bit, for example, “Huckleberry Finn” and “racism” and “Jim” and “dialect,” you will narrow your results to 37 potentially relevant sources.
- Go to http://www.jstor.org/about/tutorials/basic_search_tutorial/ for an online tutorial that shows you how to use the basic search function.

➤ You will probably find it most productive to move right to an “**Advanced Search.**” By selecting this tab, you are presented with a new search screen that enables you to refine your search terms as well as limit the dates of the material you search.

➤ How to use **search commands** effectively:

- Use “**and**” and “**not**” to limit your search.
- Use “**or**” to broaden your search.
- Use **quotation marks to isolate a specific phrase** you are searching for, such as the following: “the yellow wallpaper” in one field, rather than “yellow” and “wallpaper” in separate fields.
- Refer to the “**Tips**” page on JSTOR for help using the database and more advanced search commands. For example, using an asterisk to search for „feminis*“ will search for feminist and feminism; using „wom?n“ will include woman, women, and womyn in the results.

- Once your **search results** are presented, you will need to **evaluate their relevance** to your research interests:
 - Browse the titles and click on those that appear relevant.
 - Determine whether an article will help you by scanning the first few pages or reading the abstract. An **abstract** is a short paragraph that summarizes an article.

- **Click on the title of the article to read through it.** Links at the top corners of the scanned page enable you to „page“ **forward and back** through the article.

- From the search results page, you may also click to **download the article**. Downloading the article is helpful because you can easily print the article in its entirety while having a copy saved in case you need to come back to it.

- As you go through your search results, you can choose to **“Save Citation”** for relevant articles. When you are through sifting the results, click on **“View Saved Citations” for a customized bibliography** of the articles you have selected. **You can then read, print, or save each accordingly.**

* **Note:** If you read an article from the screen without printing or saving, and you think you will be referring to it in your paper, be sure to write down the necessary information you will need (author, article title, journal title, date, page numbers) in order to include it later in your MLA “Works Cited” page. If you might include a direct quote, a summary, or a paraphrase of any material in an article, you should print the article. You can then refer back to the article to be sure you have properly incorporated and cited any quotations or properly acknowledged and cited any summaries or paraphrases