An annotated bibliography, as opposed to a standard bibliography which lists resources alphabetically, has two crucial functions-to describe and evaluate. The annotated bibliography should first describe the source, indicating what the work's thesis and approach are and what materials or subjects are discussed. (For our purposes what novels, plays, stories, etc., are discussed and in how much detail.) The second function is a critical assessment of the work's usefulness. Thus an annotated bibliography will comment on issues of usefulness, reliability, and contribution to existing scholarship. The point here is to say more than "I liked it"; if it is solid or useful, suggest how and why.

See the samples below for an idea of the length and content of a bibliographic annotation; also consult the "Short Guide to MLA Formatting" on my web site.

Your bibliography should contain entries representing the following categories:

4 journal articles
1 essay or chapter in a book
1 book (if there is no book-length study on your author, replace with another journal article or interview with the author)


Aarons examines how Paley, a “master of the construction of dialogue in the short-story form uses narratives and conversation as a way to create a “community of shared experience” for the characters in her stories. Aarons also stresses that “storytelling” is a “life-affirming force” in Paley’s work because it places her characters “in the context of a wider human history.”


Budick argues that Paley, McCullers, O’Connor, and Morrison are four twentieth-century
women writers who “have inherited and adapted the classical tradition of American romance fiction.” In a separate chapter on Paley, Budick shows how desire to “reaffirm and revise [the society of white male domination] from her own distinctive [female, Jewish] position.”


In this interview, Paley explains why she made the switch from writing poems to writing short stories. She also answers some questions concerning the theme of “A Conversation with My Father.”


DeKoven praises two aspects of Paley’s “innovative form: 1) her ability to use “structural open-endedness” to make her fiction “true-to-life” and 2) her ability to use “startling, comic-bizarre language and imagery to make a profound literary moment which we experience simultaneously as a unity beyond pathos and language and also as a concatenation of the two separate elements.


Greiner examines why Paley reverses the chronological order of “A Subject of Childhood” and “The Used-Boy Raisers,” the two narratives within “Two short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life.” In his discussion of possible explanation, he notes the importance of diaspora and “historical frustration of Jewish desire for a stable home.
and homeland” in both narratives and concludes that the chronological reversal “emphasizes [the] historical antecedents” of the main character, Faith.


This article provides a list of both primary and secondary sources from 1959 to 1986. In addition to print materials, it provides a list of audio-visual materials and mentions one stage adaptation of her short stories. Halfman and Gerlach also include French and German translations of Paley’s work as well as French and German “items of critical import.”


After stating that “subject matter has been declared nonexistent” by deconstructive philosophy, Klinkowitz examines how Paley and other contemporary fiction writers deal with the problem of writing “as a structuring act that becomes its own reality.” In this chapter he notes how Paley’s “understanding of gender roles” is a “generative force” that sustains the structure of her narratives.


Meyer begins by examining how Paley questions her own political beliefs on racism and civil rights through the “fictional persona of Faith Darwin Asbury, a recurring personality” in such stories as “Faith in a Tree,” “Long-distance Runner,” and “Zagrowsky Tells.” However, he concludes with an analysis of “Zagrowsky Tells” that
praises Zagrowsky’s ability” to challenge [Paley’s] political assumptions.”


Seaman labels Paley a “park-bench writer who heard the music of the hart in everyday conversations and perceived the epic struggle between good and evil in the humblest of lives.” She praises this last collection of poems wisdom and sagacity. Like her stories, her poems are “pithy aphoristic, conversational, offhandedly beautiful.”

Soete, Mary. Rev. of *Later the Same Day*, by Grace Paley. *Library Journal* 1 April 1985, 159.

Soete praises Paley’s distinctive style as being “casual, open-ended, seemingly artless, astute.” The stories present a circle of friends who gather around a central character, Faith, who listens, observes, and records their “life-long attachments.” Many of the stories border on the fable form and are enlivened by wit and a keen ear for dialogue.