

Annotated Bibliography

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, Victoria. "A Perfect Marginality: Public and Private Telling in the Stories of Grace Paley." *Studies in Short Fiction* 27.1 (1990): 35-41.

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, Emily Miller. "The Graceful Art of Conversation: Grace Paley." *Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition, 1850-1990*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994. 219-45.

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.”

Charters, Ann. “A Conversation with Ann Charters: Grace Paley.” *Major Writers of Short Fiction: Stories and Commentaries*. Ed. Ann Charters. Boston: Bedford Books, 1993. 1156—60.

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, Marianne. “Mrs. Hegel-Shtein’s Tears.” *Partisan Review* 48.2 (1981): 275-223.

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, Hoke. “The Question of Chronology in Paley’s “Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 29.4 (1992): 583-86.

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.

Halfman, Ulrich and Philipp Gerlach. “Grace Paley: A Bibliography.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 8.2 (1989): 339-54.

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.”

Klinkowitz, Jerome. “Constraint: Gender.” *Structuring the Void: The Struggle for Subject in Contemporary American Fiction*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1992. 119-34.

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, Adam. “Faith and the ‘Black Thing’: Political Action and Self-Questioning in Grace Paley’s Short Fiction.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 31.1 (1994): 78-89.

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, Donna. Rev. of *Fidelity*, by Grace Paley. *Booklist* 1 Mar. 2008: 43-44.

Seaman labels Paley a "park-bench writer who heard the music of the heart 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.