

Some key elements to consider when creating an annotated bibliography:

Your list should be titled “Annotated Bibliography.” Not Bibliography, not Works Cited. Put this title in the top center of your first page.

Divide your Annotated Bibliography into two sections, labeled Primary Sources and Secondary Sources

- In each section, entries should be alphabetized by the first word excluding “A,” “An,” and “The.”

Other key formatting instructions:

- Single-space each entry and skip one line between entries.
- All source citations are tabbed 1/2 inch (one tab) after the first line.
- URLs (web addresses) should NOT be hyperlinked.

Annotations:

Now we need to create an annotation to support that citation. Essentially, we are giving the reader a hint about what he or she could find in this source. A good annotation contains three components:

- It **identifies what type of source** this is (song, poem, book, website, journal article, diary entry, newspaper article, you get the drift....)
- How **was the source used?**
- How did the source help you **understand your topic and create your project?**

Note that my annotation and citation are single-spaced, and all lines after the first line are tabbed in one-half (1/2) inch. And please do not color code in your bibliography—this is just to demonstrate HOW to do it.

So for my book, my annotation would look something like this:

Morris, Edmund. *Theodore Rex*. New York: Modern Library, 2001.

This **biography of Theodore Roosevelt** helped me **understand the way in which Philippe Bunau Varilla was able to get President Roosevelt to recognize the revolutionary government of Panama**. It also gave

me details regarding the specific treaties signed between the two nations that gave the U.S. control of the canal zone.

An annotation normally should be about 2-4 sentences long. Really long annotations generally do not impress people. Get to the point! Please understand that it is NOT the purpose of an annotation to summarize the book but to assess its value to your research.

The NHD *Contest Rule Book* states that the annotations “must explain how the source was used and how it helped you understand your topic.” Do not recount what the source said in detail. Sometimes there are some other details that you might want to include in an annotation, including:

- **Classification of primary or secondary source.** You should use the annotation to explain why you categorized a particular source as primary or secondary, only if that is likely to be controversial. Historians do sometimes disagree, and there is not always one right answer, so justify your choice to the NHD judges.
- **Secondary source that included primary material.** You may also use the annotation to explain that a book or other secondary source included several documents, photographs, or other primary materials used for the project. But please note, **this book is still a secondary source, and should be included in the secondary source section of your bibliography.**

Examples:

- “This book included three letters between person X on the frontier and person Y in New England, which provided insight into the struggles and experiences of the settlers.”
- “This book provided four photos of settlers on the Great Plains and their homes, which were used on the exhibit.”
- **Fuller explanation of credits for documentaries.** You are supposed to give credit in a documentary for photos or other primary sources, but you can do this in a general way, such as by writing, “Photos from: National Archives, Ohio Historical Society, A Photographic History of the Civil War” in your credits. You then can use the annotation in the bibliography to provide more detailed information about the images that you found and HOW you used them in your documentary.
- **Should I list each photograph or document individually?** When you find a collection of photographs that you want to use, you only need to cite them once, as a group.

- **How many sources should I have for my annotated bibliography?** We cannot tell you a specific number of sources, as that will vary by the topic and by the resources to which you have reasonable access. For some topics, such as the Civil War or many twentieth century U.S. history topics, there are many sources available to you. For other topics, such as those in ancient history or non-U.S. history, far fewer sources may be available. The more good sources you have, the better, but do not pad your bibliography. Only list items that you actually use; if you looked at a source but it did not help you at all, do not include it. Remember, **quality** sources that you use well are more impressive than a large **quantity** of sources that you barely touched.