An annotated bibliography is a list of citations for books, periodicals, documents, articles, etc. Each citation or reference is followed by a brief paragraph describing the article, who wrote it, and how you are going to apply it to your paper.

Basic guidelines:

- Use the standard MLA or APA citation style, depending on the format of your paper.
- The citations need to be alphabetized according to the last name of each author.
- The second line of each citation needs to have a hanging indent (hint: to do this in Microsoft Word, highlight the whole citation, right click the mouse, and select “Paragraph” in the drop-down menu. Under the “Special” option, select “Hanging” by .5).
- The annotation should be written in present tense.
- The annotation summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article, including any or all of the following elements:
  1. Discussion of the author’s or source’s credibility and/or background
  2. Summary of the source
  3. Discussion of the intended audience (who the article was written for)
  4. Comparison to another specific work listed in the bibliography
  5. Explanation of how you will use the source in your writing and research
  6. Quotes from the source that you may use in your paper

Example (with MLA citation):


Civil War Times is a historical periodical with contributions from historians and Civil War experts. The article is intended for anyone with an interest in the Civil War and the history of Irish Americans. After providing some background information about Irish immigrants, the author discusses Irish-American soldiers in the war, some of the difficulties they faced, and how they proved their patriotism. I might use this source in examining what caused ethnic prejudice against Irish immigrants as well as how the Civil War helped them overcome prejudice.