

Literature Online – Searching Guide

Overview

Literature Online has been specially developed in order to make finding authors, texts, quotations, word occurrences and thematic connections as easy as possible. It has a range of search and browse options that are designed specifically to be powerful yet straightforward ways of navigating and discovering the vast collection of over 350,000 poems, plays and works of prose that make up Literature Online's primary works. Literature Online's criticism and reference files contains ABELL, the MLAIB (a premium module and not available to all users), essential encyclopaedias and dictionaries as well as a huge Full-Text Journal collection comprising over 275,000 articles – all of which can be searched and browsed in a simple, intuitive yet sophisticated way. From the very first steps in discovering a topic to advanced and in-depth research, Literature Online has the finding tools for every job.

This document will explain what Literature Online's search options are and how best to use them.

A Key Point

All keyword searches are, by default, exact phrase searches unless you are using Boolean or proximity operators. This means that Literature Online looks for exact matches for all of the words you typed into the search box. For example, if you search for *host daffodils* using the Keyword(s) in Work search box on the Search Texts page you will not get any results. However, if you search for *host of golden daffodils* you will find the poem by Wordsworth.

Quick Search

Quick Search is a simple way to find what you are looking for in Literature Online. A Quick Search box appears on the left-hand navigation bar of every page. You can use it to find all the resources in Literature Online related to a particular author, title of a work, or subject matter. You can even use it to search for word(s) in the text of any work contained in Literature Online.

Quick Search searches the Literature Online indexes, which contains all the following information:

- author names
- author information such as nationality, gender and literary movement
- major works of selected authors
- terms that relate to selected authors and texts
- authors and titles of all the poems, plays and prose works in Texts
- authors, titles and subject terms for all journal articles, bibliographic citations, biographies and other resources in Criticism and Reference

Authors Search

You can search for authors by name, or according to particular criteria; use the list displayed to go to an Author Page containing links to all the resources available for a particular author e.g. texts, criticism, biography, Web sites.

You can quickly find information about an author by using one or any combination of the search boxes: **Find Author(s)**, **Living in the year(s)**, **Gender**, **Nationality**, **Ethnicity**, **Literary Movement** or **Literary Period**.

If you need help deciding what to enter into a search box, you can click the relevant "Select from a list" link. This displays a list of appropriate terms for you to select, which are then transferred back to the relevant search box when you click **Select**.

To narrow the scope of your search you can join together your search terms using special sets of predefined words called operators. Boolean, proximity and truncation searching provides more information on how to use these operators. See below for more on these features.

Texts Search

You can use text in a way that was previously not possible in electronic form; you can search the full text of all the packages to which you are subscribed for instances of a particular word. For example, you can list all works that contain the word 'blue'. If you are a subscriber to *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, you can also link through to records in *EEBO* direct from a Texts List of Results.

Search Texts is divided into different search pages:

- The Search: Texts All page allows you to search works belonging to any literary category, including literary works in journals, e-texts held on third-party websites, and entries in *Early English Books Online* (accessible to subscribers to this service).
- The Search: Texts Poetry, Drama and Prose pages limit your search to works of that category and provide more genre-specific information.

The pages that are displayed will depend on which combination of packages you have subscribed to.

You can quickly find a particular text or information about an author by using one or any combination of the basic search boxes - **Keyword(s) in Work**, **Title Keyword(s)** and **Author(s)**.

If you need help deciding what to enter into a search box, you can click the relevant "Select from a list" link. This displays a list of appropriate terms for you to select, which are then transferred back to the relevant search box when you click **Select**.

To narrow the scope of your search you can join together your search terms using special sets of predefined words called operators. Boolean, proximity and truncation searching provides more information on how to use these operators. See below for more on these features.

Searching for variant spellings

Due to the exclusive inclusion of search functionality enabled by the CIC CLI Virtual Modernization Project, users can now retrieve instances of spelling variation by selecting the 'Variant spellings' checkbox or using the 'Check for variants' feature.

Wherever possible Literature Online features the first authorized edition of any given literary work and preserves the spelling and punctuation of the copy text. Users should be aware when searching that the spelling of some words has changed and that a modern-spelling search term will not in itself be adequate to retrieve all the relevant results from historical texts.

For instance, entering the search term *virtue* will not retrieve occurrences of *vertue*; *sensibility* will not match with *sensibilitie* or *sensibillity*, and *honor* will not pick up *honour*. However, you can now use the new Variant spellings check box. If you enter a modern English word in the Keyword(s) in Work box and check the Variant spellings box, you will automatically retrieve all instances of your search term and its early modern variant forms in Literature Online. For example, if the box for Variant spellings is checked and you type the word *soldier* in the Keyword(s) field, when you submit your search you will retrieve all occurrences of the word *soldier* and its early modern variants such as *soldiour*, *souldiour*, *souldyer*, and *sovldiovr*.

The variant spellings search will automatically search for typographical variants of your search term(s) also. If you check this box and submit your search, *Literature Online* will find variant forms of your search term in which characters have been substituted such as v for u and s for f. For instance, a search for Keyword(s) in Work: "*Julius Caesar*" with the Include typographical variants checkbox ticked will retrieve occurrences of *Julius Caesar* and variant forms such as *Iulius Cæsar* and *Ivlivs Cæsar* (common in early printed editions of works by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Webster).

Searching for variant forms

The Variant Forms box allows users to lemmatise their search terms and takes the process of standardisation one step further. Lemmatisation is the linguist's term for the practice of bundling the different forms of a word under the form in which the word is likely to appear in a dictionary. Thus *loves*, *loved* and *loving* are forms of the lemma *love*. Lemmatisation is part of the Virtual Orthographic Standardisation project, which will allow users to look for all variant spellings of the standard spelling *love* or search for the lemma *love*, which would retrieve all variant spellings of the standard spellings *love*, *loves*, *loveth*, *loving*, and *loved*.

Criticism and Reference Search

Literature Online allows you to search for material written about an author or their works, including full text articles, references to articles, monographs and dissertations, related websites and major literary reference works. This material is referred to as 'criticism and reference' and can be searched in the following ways.

When you search for criticism and reference material, Literature Online lists information available in the MHRA's ABELL (Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature), the MLA International Bibliography (if subscribed), major reference works and on the World Wide Web. These sources can be in the form of citations, full text, article page images or links to other websites containing relevant information.

Search Criticism & Reference is divided into four pages: The Search Criticism & Reference All page (default) allows you to search all three types of criticism and reference sources at once, whereas the Criticism, Reference and Web Sites pages limit your searches to those particular resources. Click one of the links at the top of the search form to open the relevant page.

From the **Search Criticism & Reference All** page, you can find material by using one or a combination of the search boxes: **Keyword(s)** and **Author/Subject(s)**. This search will also retrieve results from Oxford Reference Online.

The **Criticism** page gives you options to either search across all criticism resources, or to limit your search to records from the MHRA's Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature and associated full text where available. Subscribers to MLA International Bibliography have the additional option to limit searches to MLAIB records. The MLAIB search interface offers standard and advanced search fields, and a Directory of Periodicals search. You can switch between the Criticism search pages by using the links labelled **Criticism options** at the top of the page.

You can choose to confine keyword searching to the full text, or to records only. You can restrict your search to articles only, reviews only or literary works only.

The **Reference** page allows you to limit your search to major literary reference works. The Reference search will also retrieve results from Oxford Reference Online.

The **Web Sites** page allows you to limit your search to the third-party websites that we have indexed.

If you need help deciding what to enter into a search box, you can click the relevant "Select from a list" link. This displays a list of appropriate terms for you to select, which are then transferred back to the relevant search box when you click **Select**.

Boolean, Proximity and Truncation Searches

Boolean Operators

Literature Online allows you to combine your search terms so you can target your search at more specific areas. For example, from the Search Texts page you can list the works in Literature Online produced during the eighteenth century which contain the words romantic and love.

You combine your search terms using the following special keywords, called Boolean operators:

- AND
- OR
- NOT

AND

The AND operator retrieves all works that contain the search terms it separates. However, this type of search normally retrieves fewer results than if you searched for one of the terms on its own.

If you have entered search terms in more than one search box, Literature Online treats them as if they were combined using the AND operator.

Note that if you want to search for the word 'and' in a phrase, such as 'love and hate', you should type the phrase into the search box and enclose it in double quotes; for example, "love and hate".

OR

The OR operator retrieves all works that contain either or both of the search terms it separates. This type of search retrieves more results than if you searched for one of the terms on its own.

If you select more than one search term from a list, Literature Online automatically combines them in the search box using this operator.

Note that if you want to search for the word 'or' in a phrase, such as 'love or hate', you should type the phrase into the search box and enclose it in double quotes; for example, "love or hate".

NOT

The NOT operator retrieves all works that contain the first search term but not the second.

Note that if you want to search for the word 'not' in a phrase, such as 'love not hate', you should type the phrase into the search box and enclose it in double quotes; for example, "love not hate".

Example

To search for works that refer to the four seasons:

- Enter **spring or summer or autumn or winter** in the **Keyword** box.
- Click the **Search** button.

The Texts List of Results page will be displayed, listing all works containing any or all of the words 'spring', 'summer', 'autumn' or 'winter'.

Proximity Operators

Literature Online not only allows you to search for a particular word or phrase, but also enables you to refine your searches by using two proximity operators to look for words that are close to each other:

- NEAR
- FBY (Followed BY)

To use proximity operators:

- Enter your first search term.
- Enter a proximity operator.

- Enter a full stop followed by the required number of words you want to allow between search terms; for example, near.6.

If no maximum is set, Literature Online will list all items that contain the selected search terms within ten words of each other. However, you may not see all the words that you searched for until you view the **Full text** of the work, as only the five words directly before and after the first search term are given in the Texts List of Results page.

If you are performing a phrase proximity search, Literature Online counts the number of words between the first word of the first phrase and the first word of the second phrase.

NEAR operator

Allows you to search for terms that have a specified distance between each other, and are in any order. For example:

- education near female
- sly near.6 fox

FBY operator

Allows you to search for terms that have a specified distance between each other, and are in a specified order. For example:

- heart fby head
- young fby.5 in love

Truncation and Wildcard Characters

Literature Online allows you to use two different wildcard characters, * (asterisk) and ? (question mark), when entering search terms.

If you wish to find occurrences of words that share the same opening characters but have variant endings (such as sequestered and sequestering), use the * wildcard (sometimes also known as a truncation operator) as the final character in your search term (e.g. sequester*). Literature Online will retrieve all words with the same opening characters, regardless of length. If you are performing a phrase search, you can only use the * wildcard at the end of the final word in the phrase.

The ? wildcard can be used to replace any character in a given search term, regardless of position (as in gr?y, hono?r, ?nquiry or gothic?). Literature Online will search for all terms matching your search term that have any single character or no character in the position occupied by the ? wildcard (for example grey or gray, honor or honour, enquiry or inquiry, gothic or gothick).