

The class I wrote my research paper for was English 403: Shakespeare's Early Works. Throughout the semester, our class wrote three papers and a final research paper on Shakespeare's narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*. Each paper had us analyze a specific aspect of the text including syntax, diction, and rhetorical devices to gain a deeper understanding of certain passages and the poem as a whole. The final paper allowed us the freedom to explore a topic or theme of our choosing in relation to *Venus and Adonis* and support our thesis using research from other literary sources. The final project for my Shakespeare class taught me the value of using primary and secondary sources for supporting an argument or thesis.

To begin my research, I had to pick a topic from Shakespeare's works we read throughout the semester that paralleled themes within *Venus and Adonis* and that I could write about at length. I chose to write about how Shakespeare's Victorian women used their sexuality as a tool for manipulation because I was particularly fascinated by gender roles in Elizabethan England. Although England relied on Queen Elizabeth to rule the sovereign nation, this powerful female was a novelty and her influential leadership didn't translate into political authority for women throughout the country. The manipulation of men through sexual wiles offered women the chance to get what they wanted but couldn't take outright. Women's sexuality and gender roles in society is a topic of particular importance because it is still being argued today. I chose to write about this theme because it resonates well with struggles women continue to face in modern society.

To select sources for my research topic, I went to McKeldin Library and Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland, College Park. My English teacher held class in an upstairs catalogue room where a librarian showed us how to search online databases like JSTOR

and find hard copies of books on the library shelves. While I had used online databases for research papers before, I had never actually checked out materials from McKeldin Library to use for academia and had no idea how many great resources the library actually housed. The librarian had us pull up McKeldin's webpage and log into our school accounts. From here, she showed our class how to enter in key words, phrases, themes, titles, authors, genres, and dates so we could find pertinent sources and information to use in our research papers. This is how I conducted the rest of the research for my paper. I checked out five books from Hornbake library including a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, John Roe's publication of Shakespeare's narrative poems *The poems: Venus and Adonis, the Rape of Lucrece, the Phoenix and the Turtle, the Passionate Pilgrim, A Lover's Complaint*, Russ McDonald's *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, and Everyman's Library edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets and Narrative Poems*. When I am writing a paper and using outside resources, I prefer print editions of sources because I find them easier to read and browse through as opposed to online sources. These five print sources helped shape the basis of my paper and provided me with different versions of Shakespeare's works that I found useful to compare. Although I prefer print editions of sources, I did use online databases to help me find critical essays and analyses on themes and topics relevant to the thesis I explored in my paper. The most effective way to use an online database is to enter key words or phrases about the topic you wish to research, the dates or periods in time you wish to draw analyses from, and the kind of criticisms you wish to use including essays, biographies, and articles. When entering keywords online, it is also important to ensure that you use appropriate punctuation like quotations, semicolons, and commas, to ensure that the research generated is as close to what you're looking for as possible. The database I find most effective is JSTOR because it's easy to

use and generates tons of useful sources. From JSTOR I found two particularly useful critical essays about sexuality in Shakespeare's works that proved useful in supporting my argument that women in Shakespeare's plays and narrative poems use sexuality as the ultimate tool to manipulate situations and others.

Writing this research paper was challenging but fruitful because the experience taught me the importance of properly citing sources, being mindful of academic integrity when incorporating sources into your own ideas, and finding sources that strengthen the thesis you're trying to support. While I've written research papers in the past, this is the first time that I felt confident in the sources I cited because I knew that they came from legitimate databases and academic libraries. If I could change anything about this writing experience, I would spend more time in McKeldin and Hornbake sorting through the stacks of literary references available to me. I feel that I only brushed the surface of all the wonderful sources they have to offer. The only thing I think the library should improve on is the hours of operation for certain floors and sections in Hornbake Library, especially the rare manuscripts section! I thoroughly enjoyed the research process for this paper and am lucky I learned so many valuable tools for writing in the future.