

## ABELL and MLAIB: Search Tips

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**ABELL:** *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* provides references to books, periodical articles, book reviews, collections of essays and doctoral dissertations (until 1999) published anywhere in the world from 1920 to the present.

**MLAIB:** *MLA International Bibliography* consists of bibliographic references from more than 4,400 journals in the fields of literature, language, linguistics and folklore from 1926 to the present. It also indexes books, dissertations and websites. Abstracts (summaries) are included for some journals. Book reviews are not indexed.

**ABELL** and **MLAIB** also include the full text of more than 300 journals, as well as links to relevant full-text journals on Project MUSE and JSTOR, some dating back to 1884. ABELL and MLAIB searches can be combined.

### ***National Literatures, Literary Periods and Subject Authors***

**ABELL** assigns at least two subject headings about literature: literary period and subject author. Literary periods are expressed in adjectival form by century, e.g., Twentieth Century. Subject authors are listed last name first and can be searched in the Subject field.

**MLAIB** assigns at least three subject headings to most records about literature: national literature, literary period, and subject author. National literatures are listed in adjectival form, e.g. Canadian Literature. Literary periods are displayed as years of a century, e.g. 1800-1899. Authors are listed last name first, usually with birth and death dates. These can be searched in the Subjects-All field or in the Author as Subject field.

### ***Titles of Literary Works***

**ABELL:** Titles of literary works are normally **not included** as subject headings for records that entered the database **before 2000**, except for the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

**MLAIB:** Titles of literary works are **not included** as subject headings **before 1981**, except for the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare, and JSTOR records. Since 1981 the title and genre of the literary work are listed in the subject headings. Titles of literary works can be searched in the Subject-All field or in the Author's Work field. Titles of literary works normally include date(s) of creation.

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### Keyword Searching

Truncation: \* for unlimited number of characters at the end of a word, e.g. **home\*** will find home, homes, homestead, homework, etc

Wildcard: ? symbol to replace zero or one character within a word, e.g., **colo?r** will find color, colour

Boolean Operators: **AND OR NOT**

Proximity Operators: **NEAR** and **FBY** (followed by) – default is 10 words but can be specified: spring fby.14 summer

Phrase searching: use quotation marks for phrases that contain these words: **AND OR NOT NEAR** – e.g., **“oryx and crane”** Quotation marks are not necessary for other phrases, e.g., **such a long journey**

Parentheses: Ex: roman\* NOT (julius caesar OR mark antony)

### Best Practices

1. Example: To find criticism in **ABELL, MLAIB** or **Combined Search** about feminism and Margaret Atwood's *Blind Assassin*:
  - In keyword search box, type: blind assassin and feminis\*
    - Option: Uncheck *Include journal full text in keyword search* for more precise searching
  - In the **Subject** search box, type: Atwood Margaret
2. Example: To find criticism in **ABELL, MLAIB** or **Combined Search** about a popular author and literary work, such as Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*:
  - In the **Subject** box, type: James Henry and “portrait of a lady”
    - This search will retrieve too many hits.
    - Add a term or terms in the keyword box
    - Option: Uncheck *Include journal full text in keyword search* for more precise searching