

Topic Page: [Literature](#)

Definition: **literature** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Collections of writings, usually grouped according to language, period, and country of origin. Within such groupings, literature may be subdivided into forms, such as poetry and prose, and within these again into categories, such as verse drama, novels, epic poems, tragedies, comedies, satires, and so on. See *also* literary criticism

Summary Article: **Literature**

From *The SAGE Glossary of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*

A collection of textual or spoken works that share a common subject matter. Though the term traditionally refers to a humanities context and includes belles-lettres, prose, verse, fiction, or nonfiction with a recognized artistic value, the concept is appropriately applied to the social sciences realm as well. In the broadest sense, literature is a means of communication. An author or editor intends to communicate a message to be broadcast to a community of readers. The medium—be it a book, a magazine article, or a speech— is a vehicle of mass communication.

In general, literature is considered to be something worthy of and important to record and preserve as a cultural marker. However, the term can refer to material such as campaign literature or propaganda addressing a particular political candidate or social issue. That which might be considered ephemera at one given moment can be preserved for posterity and become part of the literature on a particular subject. Though the artistic or aesthetic notion of literature does not include journalism, for example, such writing is commonly referred to as “the first draft of history.”

Regardless of the discipline, whether social or behavioral sciences, hard sciences or humanities, there is a body (or bodies) of scholarly work that is considered to be fundamental to the study of the field or subject. This body of work is analogous to the traditional literary canon. Researchers in a field habitually engage in a literature review at the start of a research project. Monographs, gray literature (reports, conference papers, newsletters, and other texts usually not published commercially), and journal articles comprise the types of literature that might be included in a literature review in any given social science field. In some disciplines, such as psychology and anthropology, journal literature might constitute more of the review, whereas in history, monographs might figure more prominently.

See also

Databases for Literature Searches, Discipline

APA



Chicago

Harvard

MLA

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Chicago

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Harvard

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"Literature." *The SAGE Glossary of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, edited by Larry E. Sullivan, Sage Publications, 1st edition, 2009. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/literature>. Accessed 19 Nov. 2019.