Preparing the MLA Research Paper:
A Guide for Keene High School Students

Student's Name _____

Revised Fall 2016

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<u>Introduction to the Research Paper</u>

Research is used every day for a variety of reasons: to find a good deal on a car, to discover how to get rid of fleas in a rug, to learn the address of a company that provides a needed service or product, to find the exact lines of a poem one can't quite remember, and so on.

In addition to personal use, research is also used to help prepare reports of various types: field research, lab reports, expository papers for classes, and reports for presentation or submission on job-related or professional matters. Teachers at Keene High School expect students to research, write, and present reports for many different classes.

The English Department of Keene High School has prepared this manual based on The MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition (2016). This manual will help students in every step of the research process, from the assignment to the finished product.

<u>Related Skills</u>

The purpose of a research project is to find and present information on any topic. During the process, a number of skills are developed, including the following:

- locating, reading, and assimilating primary and secondary sources
- refining experience with electronic information
- taking notes
- outlining and organizing complex information
- formulating a clear thesis
- compiling large amounts of information into one cohesive product
- writing transitions between subtopics to connect ideas coherently
- editing a paper for correctness, style, and clarity
- preparing a complete and error-free final product
- meeting deadlines

<u>General Guidelines</u>

Though the formality of the final product may vary from assignment to assignment, some general rules apply to a research paper:

- The paper must contain a clearly-worded thesis.
- The thesis must be the focus of the entire paper and must be supported with information from reliable sources.
- Standard written English is required, with no slang, idioms, or abbreviations.
- The paper must be free of errors in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, grammar, and capitalization.
- The paper should be written in third person (he, she, they, them, their, one).

• All data, whether quoted directly or paraphrased, must be documented, or credited to the source.
• The paper must be word processed in standard format (see pg. 16)
• A list of sources, the Works Cited page, must be included.
• Internal Citations must be included.

Teachers will have specific requirements that might add to or modify the above list. In addition, many teachers provide a timeline for completing various steps in the process. Always defer to the requirements as detailed by the classroom teacher.

Steps in the Process

A fairly typical timeline follows. Due dates depend on the length and depth of the assignment. Teachers may have different systems for assessing each step of the process. In different classes and at different grade levels, the emphasis placed on each step might vary.

1. Select a topic.
2. Find sources
3. Complete source cards
4. Compile a list of Works Cited based on source cards
5. Take Notes.
6. Formulate a thesis (a preliminary thesis might precede #2 or #3).
7. Develop an outline (a preliminary outline might precede #3).
8. Organize notes and materials.
9. Write the rough draft, including documentation.
10. Edit and revise for content.
11. Edit and revise for style and clarity.
12. Edit for correct format.
13. Prepare final paper (this may include a class presentation).

Helpful Hints

• If given a choice, select a topic of interest.
• Limit topic to what can be covered thoroughly in assigned length.
• Understand what is required.
• Look for a variety of sources early in the research process.
• Meet all deadlines.
• Do not skip steps in the writing process.
• Allow time for multiple revisions.
• Save all work.

<u>Places to Search</u>

Libraries
- Keene High School
- City and town libraries
- Keene State College
- Antioch New English Graduate School
- Cheshire Medial Center (by appointment)
- Business / Industry – company libraries
- State Library
- Interlibrary Loan System
- Museums and Historical societies

<u>Types of Resources</u>
- Atlases
- Audio files
- Biographical indices
- Books
- Government publications
- Internet (Web, databases)
- Interviews
- Letters
- Literary indices, analyses, and criticisms
- Newsletters
- Pamphlets
- Periodicals
- Encyclopedias
- Dictionaries
- Videos
- DVDs

<u>Utilizing Appropriate Sources</u>
Before using a source, MLA suggests asking the following questions to ensure the source is **valid** and **reliable**. More detail for each of these questions is proveded on pp. 11-12 of *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition.*

1) WHO is the author of the source? (Is the author qualified? Does the author use appropriate research and make a logical argument?)
2) WHAT is the title of the source? (Does it have a title? If not, why not? Is it a primary source?)
3) HOW was the source published? (Does it have a recognized publisher or sponsoring agency?)
4) WHERE did you find the source? (Was it among the results of a scholarly search?)
5) WHEN was the source published? (Could the infomration have been supplemented by more recent work?)

<u>Source Cards</u>

Source cards are index cards that contain the bibliographic information of sources.

When creating source cards, follow the exact order, format, and punctuation as found under Individual Entry Format for Works Cited for the specific source type.

<u>Sample Source Cards</u> (when typing Works Cited page, double-space entire page)

Example of web page

> Alchin, Linda. "Elizabethan
> Theatre," *Elizabethan Era,*
> 23 Aug. 2009, www.
> elizabethan-era.org.uk/eliz
> abethan-theatre.htm.

Example of online database

> Paterson, Amelia. "Economic
> Trends." *Business Week,*
> vol.8, no. 20, 2009,
> EBSCOhost.

Example of book

> Freeman, George, and
> Elizabeth Anderson.
> *Researching Literature.*
> J.A. Press, 2002. pp.
> 22–30.

Example of magazine

> Carlisle, Patricia. "The
> Rolling Stones Hit the
> Road for Their World
> Tour." *Rolling Stone
> Magazine*, vol. 5 no. 8,
> 2006, pp. 39–41.

Please note: When writing by hand, titles can be underlined, but in the typed Works Cited page, titles should be italicized. This difference is due to not being able to italicize when writing out source cards by hand.

<u>Works Cited</u>

The Works Cited page is a list of resources the writer has utilized in his/her writing. Its primary purpose is to give credit to the original source for information used in the paper and to provide a list of sources so that the reader can gather more information on the topic, if desired. It is also used to check the accuracy of information and to assure the sources are reliable and current as well as to verify that the author has not plagiarized the information or made up sources. Ideally, only cited sources would be listed, but many instructors ask for all sources referenced, even if not cited in the paper, to be included.

Format
- Start a new page.
- Center and capitalize the term Works Cited at the top of the page; do not underline.

- List all sources alphabetically by the first word of the citation (note: this may be an author or first word of the title excluding a, an, the).
- Align entries justified left.
- Begin entries at the left hand margin, continue to the right hand margin, and indent five spaces or one-half inch on subsequent lines.
- Double-space entire page.
- Do not number entries.
- Place Works Cited page at the end of the paper.
- Continue with name/page number in the upper right-hand corner.
- Refer to the guidelines for the format for entries.

Guidelines for Works Cited Page

Beginning with the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, the process and format for documenting sources has changed significantly from a prescribed format based on source type to a more general process that requires that the researcher identify key elements of the source used and format the entry in such a way that citation fulfills its original purposes: giving credit to the original source and allowing readers of the research to trace the origin of source information.

Remember: the purpose of citation is to give credit to the original source as well as to allow readers to trace the information to the source used by the researcher.

On the next page is a graphic showing the Core Elements, and their prescribed order, as identified by MLA. Some basic guidelines:
- This list identifies works that are utilized within the paper. If a source is consulted but not used in the paper, it should not be included. However, if your teacher asks you to include sources not cited, or approves of their inclusion, the page should be titled "Works Consulted".
- If an element is missing, placeholders (such as n.d.) are no longer used. Simply move on to the next element.
- The publication of sources is now often a blend of formats or is undefinable. The new format is meant to allow the researcher to think critically about each source and to have more flexibility as to how to list its elements of publication.
- Common terms used in the Works Cited list such as *editor* and *translated by* are no longer abbreviated. There are some common abbreviations to be used, found on pages 96-97 of the *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition,* including abbreviations for publication company information.
- The medium of publication is now no longer given, except when needed for clarity.
- The date of access is needed only in cases where the publication date is not available or for a site that frequently changes or is updated.
- The **MLA STYLE CENTER**, a web site developed and maintained by MLA, is an official resource for citing sources. Researchers can submit their own questions for answers: style.mla.org
- If the type of source is unexpected or if the format is unusual (lecture, address), that information can be supplied at the end of the entry (followed by a period).
(see two examples, next page)

Example:
Fresh Air. Narrated by Terry Gross, National Public Radio, 20 May 2008. Transcript.

Example:
 Armstrong, Mary. "The Hero's Journey." Literature and Composition, 29 Oct. 2015,

Keene High School, Keene, New Hampshire. Classroom Lecture.

MLA Core Elements for Works Cited Page

Author:
- This entry is followed by a period.
- List last name and then first name of author. For example: Smith, John.
- Pseudonyms or screen names are listed as typed. For example: @persiankiwi

Title of source:
- This entry is followed by a period.
- If a title is not in a standardized form, standardize it. For example, if the title is in lowercase letters or is all one word, standardize the form by using appropriate punctuation and spacing. Spellings should remain as given.
- If a source is not titled, such as an image that is not titled, provide a short, generic description of the item without any punctuation marks or special capitalization except the first word of the description and any proper nouns (example: Chair of stained oak). The description may contain the title of another work (example: Blog post on "The Reading Brain: Differences Between Digital and Print.").

Container:
- This entry is followed by a comma
- Some sources have two "containers". The list of key elements can be repeated, as applicable, for the second container. For example, a journal article is often contained within a database. Or, an excerpt from a novel might be contained in a textbook.
- A second container listing follows all information for the first container.

Other Contributors:
- This entry is followed by a comma.
- Other Contributors, as found on the list of Core Elements, can be editors, directors, illustrators, translators, etc. Their contribution should be listed in the following format: Translated by, Edited by, etc.

Publication Date:
- This entry is followed by a comma.
- When using dates, consider what date is most relevant, which is often the most recent.
- If including date, month, year, use the following format: 14 Dec. 2015

Location:
- This entry is followed by a period.
- Use of Web addresses is encouraged but not mandatory.
- If using a web address, do not include http://

Examples for Works Cited Page

Note: Include pages used <u>only</u> when just one or two sections of the source is/are used. Include page numbers only if source is used in its original format. Electronic pages, in hard copy or on screen, should not be referenced. If information is taken from throughout the source, do not include specific page numbers.

Online Database: The original publication format (Journal/ Periodical) is considered the first "container" of the article. Then, the database is the second "container", for it *contains* the original journal/periodical article.

Format:
Author Last Name, Author First Name. "Title of Source." *Container One,* Volume, Issue, year of

publication, pages used. *Container Two,* Date of Access (optional).

Example:
Patterson, Amelia. "Economic Trends." *Business Week.* vol. 8, no.12, 2008. *EBSCOhost,* NEED EBSCO

address.

Website:
Format:
Author Last Name, Author First Name. (If publisher is also the author, list only in the publisher position. If

author is an organization or a group, but is not the publisher, list in the author position). "Title of

Web Page." *Title of Web Site* (Container), Version or Edition (if applicable), Publisher or Sponsor

of Web Site, Date of Publication, Date of Access (optional), location.

Example:
Alchin, Linda. "Elizabethan Theatre." *Elizabethan Era,* 23 Aug. 2009. www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/

elizabethan-theatre.htm.

Example:
"Marilyn Monroe Biography." *Biography.com.*, A + E Television Networks, 2016, www.biography.com/

peoplemarilyn-monroe-9412123.

Example:
"Bubonic Plague." PBS Learning Media, 2016, www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/odys08.sci.life.

bubonic/ bubonic- plague/.

One Author Book: A book that has one author and comes in one volume. If an author's name is followed
by a title or a degree such as Dr. or PhD., omit the titles from the Works Cited.

Format:
Author Last Name, Author First Name. *Title.* Publisher, year, pages used.

Example:
Sprague, Peggy Sue. *Mountain-biking in the High Sierra.* The Big Mountain Press, 2007, pp. 30-33.

Two Author Books: Name the authors in the order in which they are presented on the title page; reverse
the name of the first author only. Example: Freeman, George and Elizabeth Anderson.

Three or More Author Books: Cite only the first author, name reversed, followed by "et al." (Latin for
"and others"). Example: Keller, Joseph P., et al.

Anonymous Book: If a book has no author or editor, begin with the title. Do not use anonymous.

Format:
Title. Publisher, Year, Pages Used.

Example
The Kalevala. Otava Publishing Company, 1998, pp. 233-258.

Collection: A book or set of books that contains works by more than one author. Examples include specialized encyclopedias such as *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* and literary criticisms such as *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism, American Authors, Dictionary of Literary Biography.* If no author is available for the section used, begin with the title of the section used.

Format:
Author Last Name, Author First Name. "Title of the Source." *Container,* Edited by, volume, Publisher,

year, location.

Example:
Levister, Monique. "To Roses upon the Root of Time." *Gardening in New England: A Collection of*

Essays, Edited by Benjamin Strauss, vol. 2, The Milkweed Press, 2007, pp. 212-220.

Dictionary: If there is no author given for the article, the title is listed first.

Format:
Author Last Name, Author First Name. "Entry Heading (Title of the Source)." *Title of Encyclopedia or*

Dictionary (Container), Edition number (if available), publisher, year published, page number (or

URL for online dictionary).

Example (online):
"Content." *Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, 2016, unabridged.merriam-webster.com/collegiate/

content.

Periodical (magazine, journal)

Format:
Author Last Name, Author First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine,* volume, issue, publication

date, location, pages used.

Example:
Carlisle, Patricia. "The Rolling Stones Hit the Road for their World Tour." *Rolling Stone Magazine*, vol. 5

no. 8, 2006, pp. 39-41.

Films: Numerous organizations may be involved, but chose the organization that has the greatest responsibility for the work. If your focus is on a key person or character involved, you might include that person/character.

Format:
Director. *Title of Film (Title of Source).* Area of focus, Distributor, Year of Release.

Example:
Capra, Frank. *It's a Wonderful Life.* Performance by James Stewart, RKO, 1946.

The Thesis Statement

- According to MLA, a thesis statement is a single sentence that formulates the topic and point of view. It is NEVER stated as a question. Although the thesis statement is one sentence, it may be necessary to include information before and / or after the thesis statement in order to frame the context of the statement.
- The thesis statement may be revised in the process of writing the paper.
- When developing a thesis statement consider the purpose of the paper. Take into consideration the audience of the paper as well as what the paper hopes to achieve.
- The thesis statement must appear at the top of the outline and must be incorporated into the first or second paragraph of the paper.

Sample Thesis Statements

- Because of unsanitary conditions, insufficient food supplies, and substandard health care, living conditions in the Japanese internment camps during WWII were inhumane.
- Alice Walker's novels helped define aspects of the women's movement that directly address issues of Black women in America.
- The abolitionist movement was a powerful force in freeing slaves.
- Native Americans routinely face challenges such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and gambling in their lives on reservations.

How To Take Notes For a Research Paper ~ Note Cards

By taking notes in one's own words and not in complete sentences, unless directly quoting someone, plagiarism is avoided. Note cards will help to organize research material.

Format

- Use 3 X 5 or 4 X 6 index cards, preferably lined.
- Write source information on the top right of the card (author or editor's last name or the first word or two of the title of the source, not using "a", "an", or "the."
- Write the page number from which the note came on the bottom right of the card. If using an electronic source, use the page number whenever possible.
- Write the subject heading at the top left of the card. The subject heading is a key word or phrase that expresses the main idea of the topic of the note(s) on that card.
- Accurately restate the information using words and phrases, not complete sentences, unless using a direct quotation. If using a direct quotation, include the speaker's name and credentials if it is not the author of the source.

When To Use A New Note Card

- For each new source
- For each new topic
- When there is no more room on the card
- When teachers require limiting information on the card to one idea / fact

- When the page changes (if required by classroom teacher)

<u>Sample Note Cards</u>
Topic: Birth defects caused by corporate pollution
Thesis: Environmental damage from large factories causes many birth defects in the U.S. every year.
First Source: Feldstein, Mark and Steve Singer. "The Border Babies." *Time,* vol. 26, no. 9, 2002, pp.1-72.

Types of Defects Feldstein	Types of Defects Feldstein
Distorted spine, asthma, ADHD nearsightedness 17	Arthritis, acne, joint pain, stunted growth 17
Govt. Programs Feldstein Relief Aid for Children—at least one chapter in each stat. Big Sisters: 40 out of 50 states have 45	Govt. Programs-quotation Feldstein Gov. Adams: "Children are our future. We must create programs to protect them." 46

Please note: For web sources, include page or paragraph numbers on note cards only if the site explicitly provides page or paragraph numbers.

<u>The Outline Format</u>

   I.   Use topic headings only, not sentences.
   II.   Capitalize important words of the main headings (those in Roman numerals)
   III.   Capitalize only the first word of the sub-topics (any topics not using a Roman numeral.)
   IV.   Use parallel grammatical construction at all levels of the outline.
   V.   Do not use single sub-topics.
       A. If there is an A., there must be a B.
       B. If there is a 1., there must be a 2.
   VI.   Include no fewer than three major divisions in the entire outline. These will represent the three major sub-divisions of the paper.
   VII.   Avoid too much detail as well as too little detail. Usually it is not necessary to go beyond a fifth level, sub-topics indicated by small letters (e.g., a., b., c.,).
   VIII.   Do NOT use the words "Introduction" and/or "Conclusions" as category headings.
   IX.   Center and underline title.

Sample Outline   Note: This outline references the sample paper that begins on page 17.

Nelson Mandela: The Man Who Saved South Africa

Thesis: Nelson Mandela, despite the many predicaments and obstacles he had to overcome throughout his life, became known as the man who saved South Africa from racial segregation.

  I.   Background
  II. Childhood
       A. Family
       B. Education
  III. Early Life
       A. Arranged marriage
       B. Jobs
       C. Chosen marriage
  IV. Law and the ANC
       A. Early Protests
       B. Non-violence
       C. Tried for treason
               1. life imprisonment
                       a.   death of family members
                       b.   influence on others
               2. release
  V.   Apartheid
       A. Presidency
       B. Retirement
               1. elders
               2. 46664
  VI. Death
       A. Mourning period
       B. Legacy
               1. international day
               2. digital archive

Writing the Paper

Get Organized

- Make sure outline is revised and complete
- Divide note cards according to the outline categories and subcategories.
- Put note cards in order according to the order of the outline.
- Check for missing information.
- Take more notes, if necessary.
- Check for repetition.
- Combine note cards that are used twice.
- Check for relevancy.
- Remove notes that do not connect to topic.

Write the Introduction
- Use one or two paragraphs.
- Create interest in the topic.
- Provide necessary background to create context.
- State thesis.
- DO NOT USE any of the following: "this paper", "I", "me", "we", "my", "you", "your".
- Provide a general overview, not specifics, from note cards.

Write the Body
- Follow the outline.
- Type from note cards.
- Use transitions.
- Frame quotations and references with explanatory information or analysis by introducing the author's name; give the author's credentials if possible; cite the occasion of the statement, article, interview, etc.
- Identify sources in the text; refer to titles in text when appropriate.
- Paraphrase rather than quote whenever possible.
- Place paragraphs and quotations in context: Give explanation/analysis, for they should not stand alone in the text.
- Avoid quoting excessively
- Provide internal documentation for quotations and paraphrasing.

Write the Conclusion
- Refer to thesis.
- Use new form, style, and wording of thesis than in the introduction.
- End with force and energy as well as a clincher or original thought.

Documentation

MLA format uses internal documentation to prevent plagiarism. This means the writer is giving credit to the source in which she/he found the information. Plagiarism is copying someone else's work, whether visual or written, and submitting the work as one's own without giving credit to the original author or artist. This can apply to using direct quotations, paraphrasing, or summarizing. Please refer to the KHS Honor Code policy in the student handbook for additional information. Penalties for plagiarism are severe.

What to Document

- Direct Quotations—information that is in the words of the author
- Indirect Quotations—information that is paraphrased or summarized from the author, but the wording and information is taken directly from the author's viewpoint
- Statistics—examples include percentages, numbers, and/or ratios
- A fact that is not common knowledge—information not found in multiple sources or information that is in conflict with other researched information.
- Graphs, diagrams, or pictures –if not created by the writer, these should be placed in an Appendix, which is precedes the Works Cited page in the order of the final paper.

What Not to Document

- Common knowledge—information found in three or more sources; information that is not disputed
- Conclusions drawn from information found in a variety of sources

Avoid documenting too much information, but be sure to give credit where credit is due. When in doubt, it is usually safer to document than run the risk of plagiarizing.

Format for Internal Documentation

- To document, use parentheses around the author's last name and the page number from the source in which that information is found. Do NOT place a comma between the author's last name and page number.
- Internal documentation is placed directly after the information that is being cited whether it is located at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the sentence.
- If the internal documentation is located at the end of the sentence, the period is placed after the parentheses. See examples under Examples of Documentation.
- If a source does not have numbered pages (Web, film, podcast, etc), it is a best to include the first word or words of the source's entry in the Works Cited page within the text of the paper rather than as a parenthetical citation.
- If a source to be documented does not have an author, refer to the first key word on the title of the source. If it is necessary to make a distinction between sources that have no author and have the same first title key word, then give as much of the title as is necessary to distinguish it from other sources on the Works Cited list. See example for No Author and / or Editor listed under Examples of Documentation.
- If an author has multiple works in the Works Cited page, the internal documentation uses the author's last name, an abbreviated title, and the page number. Commas are used in this internal documentation. See Author's Name and Work Included in the Text listed under Examples of Documentation.
- If the author's last name is included in the text, use only the page number in the internal documentation. See example for Author's Last Name Included in Text listed under Examples of Documentation.
- When using a source that is time-based media, such as a video, cite the relevant time or range of times. See Time-Based Source under Examples of Documentation.

Note: When using a quotation that is more than four typed lines of prose or more than three lines of poetry, set off the quotation by indenting it ten spaces from the left margin. Use the normal right margin and continue to double space. Long quotations should be introduced by an informative sentence. Quotation marks are unnecessary. The documentation, in parentheses, goes after the sentence punctuation. For example:

Anthropologist Richard Leakey and coauthor Roger Lewin pose the issue of language in primates.

> Is spoken language merely an extension and enhancement of cognitive capacities to be found among [humans'] ape relatives? Or is spoken language a unique human characteristic completely separate from any cognitive abilities in apes? (240)

Examples of Documentation

- Direct Quotation—It may be true that "in appreciation of Medieval art, the attitude of the observer is of primary importance" (Maris 347).
- Paraphrase or Summary—The need for logic in children's fantasy has been recognized (Stewig 22), and children are capable of comprehending advanced logic.
- A Fact That is Not Common Knowledge—Most people are unaware that during the Civil War many soldiers were injured by ramrods flying out of hastily packed guns (Ray 29).
- Individual Thoughts or Viewpoints (including credentials)—Dr. Brown, of Dartmouth College, believes the U.S. government should develop a new policy to help Third World countries overcome poverty and hunger (Spitzer 11).

- Author's Name and Work Included in the Text—In *No Need for Hunger* Robert Spitzer recommends that the government create new policy for addressing global hunger (34).
- No Author and/or Editor—Mark Twain is considered a master at using satire in both his novels and short stories ("Twain," *Compton's* 482).
- Time-Based Source: Buffy's promise "there's not going to be any incidents" was not true ("*Buffy"* 00:03:16-17).

Order of the Research Paper (See style.mla.org/formatting-papers/ for more details)

Note: MLA does not require the use of a separate title page; however, some teachers may require one. Follow the guidelines provided by the individual teacher.

1. Outline: MLA does not require an outline, but many teachers may request one (see pp. 13-14). If included, outlines are not part of the formal paper and, thus, are not included in the header.

2. The first page of the formal paper include the following as a **heading**, double-spaced:

Information	Sample
Student Name (First Last)	Samantha P. Jones
Teacher Name	Mrs. Dearborn
Course Name	English 101
Date (date month year)	12 July 2004

3. The title of the paper is centered, 12 pt. font, no bold, underline, italics, etc. Title should reflect the content of the paper not just the topic.

4. Body of paper
- Use 12 point font and an easily readable type font, such as Times New Roman or Palatino. The italics must be distinctly different from the regular type.
- Double space entire paper.
- Tab in once at the start of a new paragraph.
- Do not add an extra space between paragraphs.
- Place one space after a period or other concluding punctuation mark.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides of the paper.

5. **Running Head**: Put last name and page number in upper right-hand corner, preferably ½" from the top. All pages of the paper, including the Works Cited page should include, in the upper right-hand corner, the following as a **running head:**

Information	Sample
Last name of student Page number	Jones 1

6. Appendix—includes maps, charts, diagrams

7. Works Cited

<u>MLA Practice Template (for Works Cited Entry)</u>

The page will contain a copy of the PDF from MLA of the Works Cited Template from MLA.