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Writing 510

Dr. Koster

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How Might I Go About This?

For the purpose of this assignment, I am assuming that I would have at least a week to spend in researching the material. In beginning to research William Blake's *The Garden of Love*, I would first sit down and try to get a copy of the work. The very first thing I would do is to go online and type in "'The Garden of Love' - William Blake" into either Google or Wikipedia. At this point I do not really care about the author or time period or anything like that, I simply want to read the work at face value to form a personal opinion of the work and to see how it impacts me as a reader.

Considering that the work is a poem, I would read over it three or four times, taking notes and making possibly connections based on the symbolism and structure of the poem.

The second step would be to begin to look at the author behind the work, and again, I would use the same basic Internet search engines to try and find out a very broad overview of the author: where did he live and grow up, what time period did he live in, and was he a religious man? I also feel it is important to try and understand a little of the time period and culture that surround any

author, as these factors can heavily impact a literary work, so once I know when Blake lived, I would also search for major happenings during his life, especially before or during the time period in which he was writing the poem. After using these simple tools I would likely search the Dacus Online Catalog for anything dealing with William Blake, his time period, or *The Garden of Love* specifically, so that when I actually walk over to the library, I already have an idea of the selection of hardcover texts available. I usually start with hard copy texts simply because I feel more productive if I actually handle text relating to the topic. Just a personal quirk I guess.

Once in the library, I would spend most of the afternoon looking over the titles I had found of possible use, focusing on anything with biographical information or general criticism on Blake and his writing, taking notes from the materials. Next I would look through the bibliography of these texts for anything I think may be of use, and if a copy is not available in the library, I decide that the time has come to take a look online.

Before attempting to use one of the online databases I would again use Google or Wikipedia to try and find basic information on the items I had written down from the bibliographies found in the hard copy texts. After exhausting this source, I would look under my two favorite online databases, JSTOR and Academic Search Premier, likely searching under the same topics that I used when looking at

Google. The main difference is that now I am no longer looking for basic background stuff to give myself a basic understanding of Blake and the poem. Now I am searching for detailed articles of analysis from academic scholars that have already critically examined the topics I am looking at. In the past, I have always been able to count on at least one of these two databases to lead me to scholarly articles full of valuable information for my papers.

At this point, I am usually feeling extremely confident about my research and feel prepared to return home and begin writing my own paper. However, this is not always the case. If at this point I have found little or no critical sources online, or I find fifty sources that all say pretty much the same thing and I desperately need a variety of material, I take an offering of blood to the librarians and beg for help. Only once have they been unable to help me if I took the time to ask, so this is a resource I have learned to not overlook.

In relation to Carr, I have only one real issue that bugs me. In his article "Is Google Making Us Stupid?", Carr makes the claim that students use Google as a quick and easy way to avoid reading. I disagree with him simply because I know that when I do online research, I end up doing more reading than I would if were to limit myself to only using physical texts. Granted, there are times when I only skim articles, but for the most part, I fully read any material I attempt to use. Also, simply because I turn to an online source

does not mean that I have skipped out on reading the primary texts used in my classes, so I believe that using online tools like Google actually forces me to spend more time reading than if I were to neglect this resource. It simply gives me access to materials not available by "normal" means in the library.