

Search Tips

All keyword searches are, by default, exact phrase searches unless you are using Boolean or proximity operators. This means that Literature Online looks for exact matches for all of the words you typed into the search box. For example, if you search for *host daffodils* using the Keyword(s) in Work search box on the Search Texts page you will not get any results. However, if you search for *host of golden daffodils* you will find the poem by Wordsworth.

Searching for variant typography:

Early modern typographical conventions mean that in pre-1700 texts in particular certain characters are often used interchangeably: the character u often appears as a v, and vice versa, such that the word love often appears as loue, and usurper sometimes appears as vsurper. Similarly, the characters j and i are often exchanged, with the word juniper occasionally appearing as iuniper, and Icarus as Jcarus. In Literature Online all of these variant forms are preserved exactly from the source text and appear in the alphabetical word index on the Keyword List page (click the [Select from a list >](#) link alongside the Keyword(s) field).

Literature Online allows you to include typographical variants in your results automatically using the relevant checkbox on the Search page. If you check this box and submit your search, Literature Online will find variant forms of your search term in which the character v has been substituted for u, u for v, j for i or y, i for j or y, y for i or j, w for vv or uu, and s for f. For instance, a search for Keyword(s) in Work: "Julius Caesar" with the Include typographical variants checkbox ticked will retrieve occurrences of Julius Caesar and variant forms such as Iulius Cæsar and Ivlivs Cæsar (common in early printed editions of works by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Webster).

Searching for variant spellings:

Wherever possible Literature Online features the first authorized edition of any given literary work and preserves the spelling and punctuation of the copy text. Users should be aware when searching that the spelling of some words has changed and that a modern-spelling search term will not in itself be adequate to retrieve all the relevant results from historical texts. For instance the search term virtue by itself will not retrieve occurrences of vertue; sensibility will not match with sensibilitie or sensibility, nor will honor pick up honour. One way to search for variant spellings is to use wildcards (search for v?rtue, hono?r or sensibil?it*); another is to type the word you are looking for in the Keyword(s) in Work field and then click the Select from a list > link. You will then be able to scroll through an alphabetical list of all the words, including all old spellings, in Literature Online texts.

For the purposes of searching, Literature Online treats non-standard characters such as the thorn (þ) exactly like their modern equivalents, so that a search for the Keyword(s) in Work 'auther' will retrieve occurrences of 'auther', 'auþer' and 'auðer'. Words containing non-standard characters can be selected from the alphabetically-arranged list for the Keyword(s) in Work field; such words can also be copied from other sources, such as Word documents or the electronic versions of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English texts in Literature Online, and pasted into the Keyword(s) in Work field.

To narrow the scope of your search you can join together your search terms using special sets of predefined words called operators. Boolean, proximity and wildcard searching provides more information on how to use these operators.

Truncation and Wildcard Characters

The symbol * is used as a right-handed truncation character only; it will find all forms of a word. For example, searching for **deconstruct*** will find "deconstruction", "deconstructed", "deconstructionist", etc.

The symbol ? is used to replace any single character, either inside the word or the right end of the word. ? cannot be used to begin a word.

For example, searching for "**wom?n**" will find "woman" and "women." Searching for "**t?re**" will find "tire", "tyre", "tore", etc.

Operators

Boolean, proximity and adjacency operators are used to broaden and narrow your search.

AND Find all the words. When searching for keywords in "Citation and Document Text," AND finds documents in which the words occur in the same paragraph (within approx. 1000 characters) or the words appear in any citation field. Use W/DOC in place of AND when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text" to retrieve more comprehensive results.
Example: Derrida AND deconstruction

NOT Find articles which have the first word, but not the second word.
Example: Derrida NOT Foucault

OR Find any of the words.
Example: Derrida OR Historicism

NEAR NEAR operator

Allows you to search for terms that have a specified distance between each other, and are in any order. For example:

- education near female
- sly near.6 fox

FBY FBY (Followed By) operator

Allows you to search for terms that have a specified distance between each other, and are in a specified order. For example:

- heart fby head
- young fby.5 in love

To use proximity operators:

- Enter your first search term.
- Enter a proximity operator.
- Enter a full stop followed by the required number of words you want to allow between search terms; for example, near.6.

If no maximum is set, Literature Online will list all items that contain the selected search terms within ten words of each other. However, you may not see all the words that you searched for until you view the Full text of the work, as only the five words directly before and after the first search term are given in the Texts List of Results page.

If you are performing a phrase proximity search, Literature Online counts the number of words between the first word of the first phrase and the first word of the second phrase.

Example Searches

The examples below illustrate the kinds of searches you can build using operators.

deconstruction

Finds articles, texts or authors that contain the word deconstruction.

creat*

Will retrieve entries for all documents containing the words: creature, creation, create, creating, creator, etc.

made in he*

Will retrieve matches for all documents containing the phrases: made in heaven, made in hell, made in her, etc.

Keats and Romanticism

Finds articles that contain the words **Keats** and Romanticism.

Love not courtly fby love.

Find works which refer to love, but not courtly love.