

Reading Wikipedia in the Classroom

Using Wikipedia to foster media and information literacy skills



Welcome!

We are glad you are interested in learning more about Wikipedia and its role in the classroom. This educational resource will show you how to examine a Wikipedia article, identify its main elements, and assess the quality of the information it contains. You will also learn new ways to help your students develop key 21st century skills through Wikipedia.

Let's start with some basic concepts:



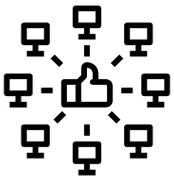
What is Wikipedia?

Wikipedia is the free online encyclopedia that anyone can edit. It is available in 300 languages and it is part of a larger group of free knowledge projects supported by the Wikimedia Foundation. Like other encyclopedias, Wikipedia should be used as a starting point in our quest for knowledge. You and your students are probably using it already!



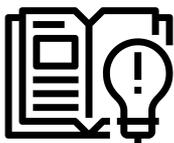
Who writes Wikipedia?

Volunteers from all parts of the world and different fields of expertise contribute their knowledge to build Wikipedia. For example, volunteers from Bolivia work collaboratively to create content and upload multimedia resources about their own history, cultural traditions, and monuments for the world to see. Part of this community also carries out offline and online activities that train people and institutions to contribute to Wikipedia.



How reliable is it?

[Research](#)⁽¹⁾ carried out in 2005 revealed that Wikipedia is as accurate as the Encyclopedia Britannica. While not all articles in Wikipedia have the same quality, the best way to make the most out of this resource is to understand its behind-the-scenes community and practices, and how to assess the information it contains. This brochure teaches you exactly that and how to guide your students to make the most of a fantastic resource.

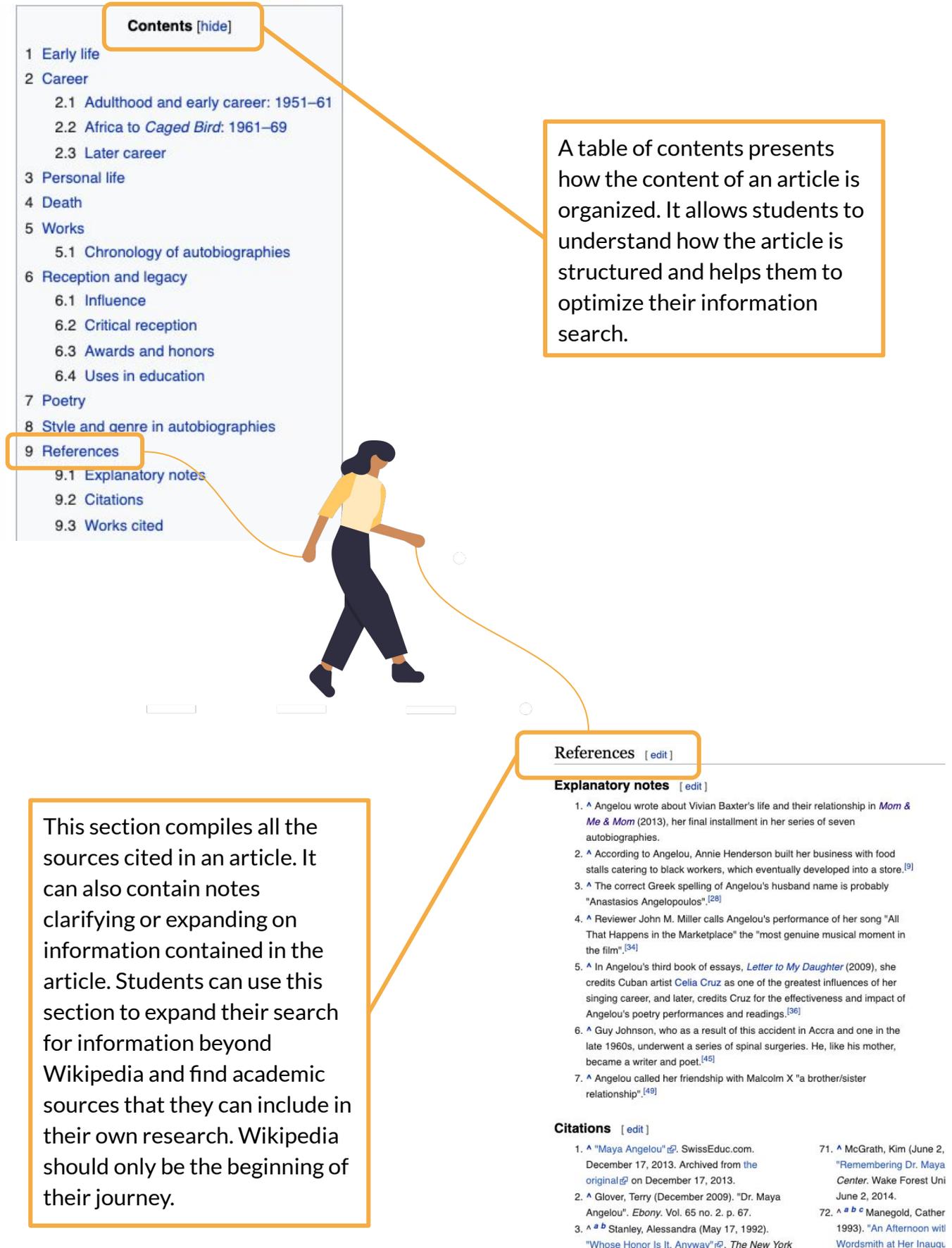


How can Wikipedia help you in the classroom?

Educators around the world are using Wikipedia to foster 21st century skills in their students. From improving articles about local landmarks to creating biographies of notable professionals, teachers and students are editing Wikipedia to enhance their learning experience and contribute to free knowledge. Wikipedia can be a powerful tool for helping students understand how knowledge is constructed, the knowledge gaps found on digital content, and how to critically evaluate the information they find online.

Anatomy of a Wikipedia article

As you keep exploring a Wikipedia article you will find more elements that can help your students to structure their search for information and to expand their sources.



Indicators of quality on a Wikipedia article

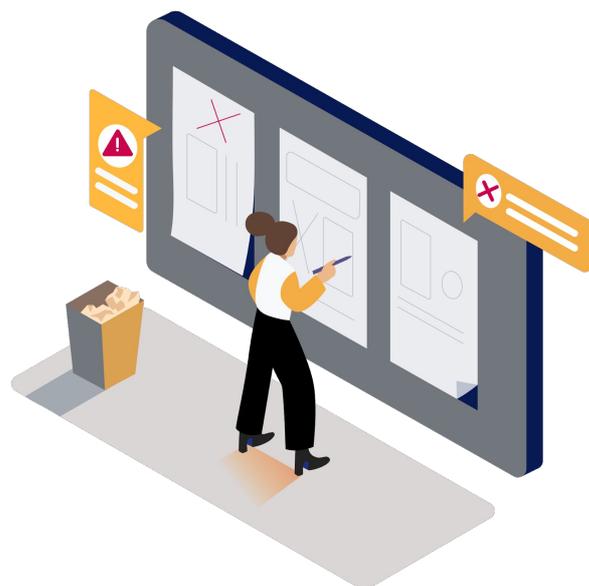


Positive indicators:

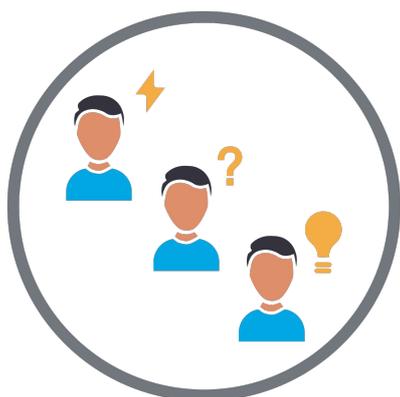
- ★ It contains several references from reliable sources.
- ★ It has an informative and clear lead section.
- ★ It covers different relevant aspects of one topic.
- ★ It presents balanced and organized content.
- ★ It is written from a neutral point of view.

Negative indicators:

- ❖ It does not have any references.
- ❖ It has a warning banner.
- ❖ It contains spelling or grammatical errors.
- ❖ It contains outdated information about a current topic.
- ❖ It contains unsourced opinions and value statements.



Luckily, all of these can be improved!



Try it yourself!

Visit the Wikipedia articles below and make an initial assessment of their quality based on the positive and negative indicators presented:

- [Julia Gillard](#)
- [Frederick Rousseau](#)
- [East Timor](#)

Integrating Wikipedia in the classroom

UNESCO's [Media and Information Literacy \(MIL\) framework](#)⁽²⁾ highlights three main competencies that can help foster critical engagement on digital platforms and a responsible digital citizenship. These three competencies are: **access**, **evaluation**, and **creation** of information.

Teachers can use Wikipedia to help their students develop MIL competencies by learning to: establish their information needs; search for information from diverse sources; evaluate information and media content; and understand how information is created. As a consequence, students gain agency in the digital space and their information consumption habits are improved. Additionally, students gain the foundations needed to have a more active role contributing content to Wikipedia in the future - they can go from passive consumers of information to active creators of knowledge for the common good.

Below you can find some guiding questions to help your students develop the first two competencies in the UNESCO MIL framework using Wikipedia.

Guiding students to find what they're looking for:

- Determine what they don't know - *What do you want to learn?*
- Refine their search terms - *What questions and keywords can lead you to the information you're looking for?*
- Use multiple search engines - *Where is the search button on Wikipedia? Where else can you find this information?*
- Follow hyperlinks - *What else can you learn about this topic? What are some connected concepts that can help you to understand this topic better?*

Guiding students to evaluate the information they find:

- Identify the sources in the References section - *Where is this information coming from? Are these sources reliable?*
- Find more details in the View History section - *Is this information up to date? Are there many people working on it?*
- Look for indications in the Warning Banners - *What is missing from this article? How can it be improved?*
- Pay attention to the language style and intention - *Is it using a neutral point of view? Is it expressing unsourced opinions or value statements over facts?*
- Refer to past and current conversations on the Talk page - *What information is being contested? What discussions have taken place around this topic?*



In the next section you will find the “Knowledge Quest”. This activity is designed for students to reflect on and document their journey navigating Wikipedia as they access and evaluate the information they need to solve a query.

My Knowledge Quest

Instructions: Use this worksheet to document your search for information on Wikipedia. Answer each question in the corresponding box to reach the “Finish” line. Compare your findings with your classmates!



Blank box for answer to: Which sources of information will I visit next?

Which sources of information will I visit next?



Blank box for answer to: What are the main discussions about this topic in the “Talk” pages?

What are the main discussions about this topic in the “Talk” pages?



How can I tell if these are facts or opinions?

Blank box for answer to: How can I tell if these are facts or opinions?

Blank box for answer to: What key ideas am I finding?

What key ideas am I finding?



What negative indicators can I see in these articles?

Blank box for answer to: What negative indicators can I see in these articles?

What positive indicators can I see in these articles?



Blank box for answer to: What positive indicators can I see in these articles?

Blank box for answer to: Which articles am I finding helpful?

Which articles am I finding helpful?



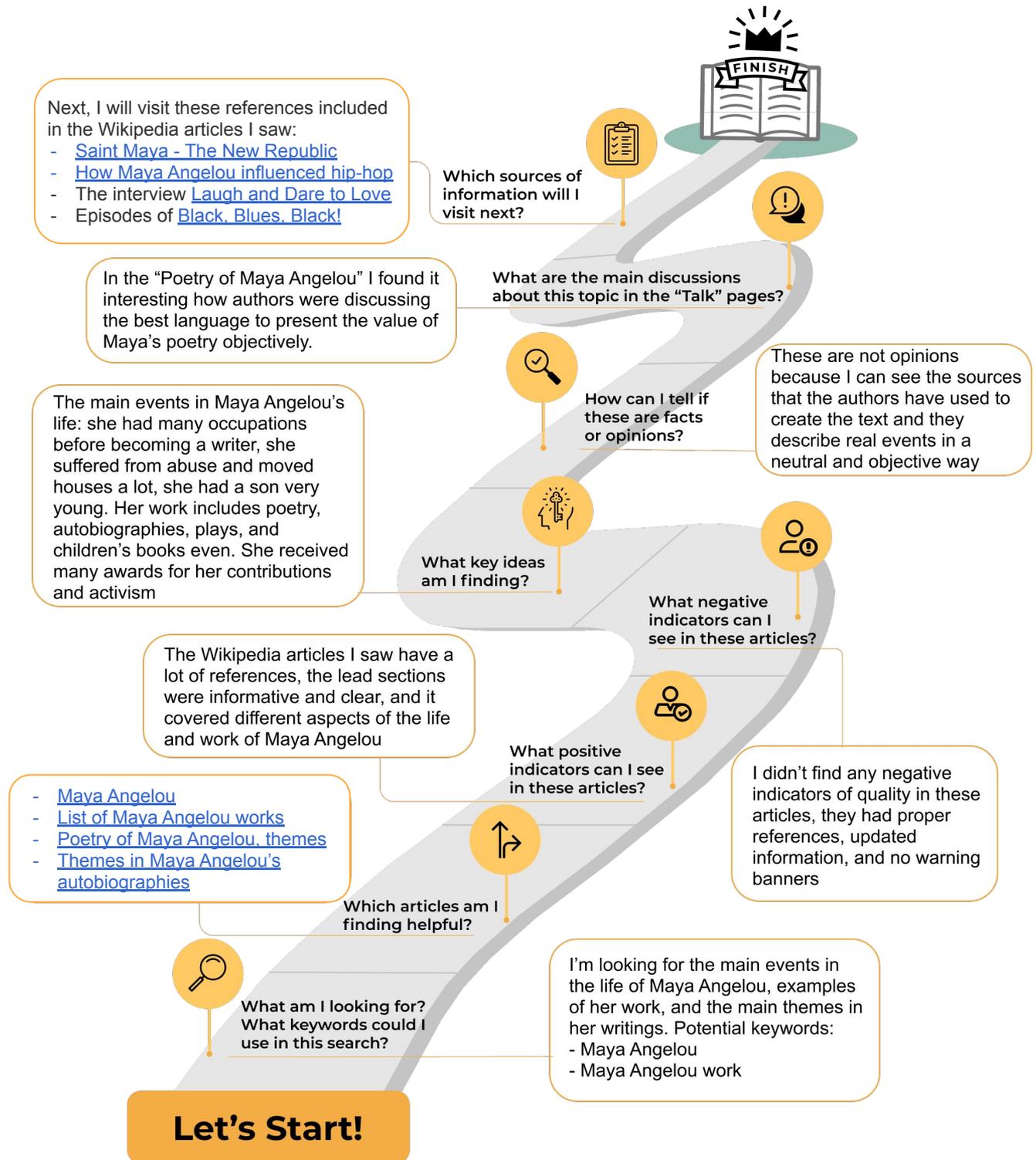
What am I looking for? What keywords could I use in this search?

Blank box for answer to: What am I looking for? What keywords could I use in this search?

Let's Start!

My Knowledge Quest - Example and rubric

Here you can find an example of a completed Knowledge Quest worksheet and a suggested rubric to evaluate the activity. Adapt and change accordingly!



Students are able to...	Score
Identify search parameters and relevant keywords	
Examine the article using positive and negative indicators of quality	
Summarize the information they find to answer their original query	
Determine if the article contains facts or opinions	
List other sources of information to continue their research	

3	Clear demonstration of understanding
2	Some demonstration of understanding
1	Unable to complete the task

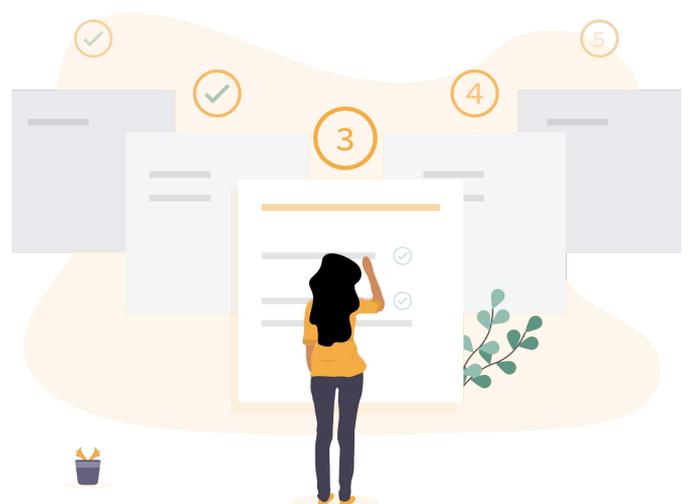
Additional resources:

- “My Knowledge Quest” editable version: [Available on Wikimedia Commons](https://w.wiki/WMB) (https://w.wiki/WMB)
- More lesson plans for incorporating Wikipedia in the classroom: [Remote learning using Wikimedia projects](https://w.wiki/MZL) (https://w.wiki/MZL)
- Other activity suggestions: [#EduWiki challenges](https://tinyurl.com/y9bxvdww) (https://tinyurl.com/y9bxvdww)
- Motivational video: [Knowledge belongs to all of us](https://w.wiki/WLP) (https://w.wiki/WLP)
- John Green’s guide to using Wikipedia: [Crash Course Navigating Digital Information](https://youtu.be/ih4dY9i9JKE) (https://youtu.be/ih4dY9i9JKE)
- Wikimedia education stories: [This Month in Education](https://w.wiki/Dfq) (https://w.wiki/Dfq)
- Find Wikipedians in your country: [Wikimedia movement affiliates](https://w.wiki/WLR) (https://w.wiki/WLR)

References:

1. Giles, J. Internet encyclopaedias go head to head. *Nature* 438, 900–901 (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1038/438900a>
2. UNESCO. (2019). Media and Information Literacy. Retrieved 7 July 2020, from <https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-and-information-literacy>

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Thank you for your interest in Wikipedia!

We hope you enjoyed this resource!

This is a sample of a teacher training toolkit in development that will be available in early 2021.

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