**Primary Text: “My Wicked, Wicked Ways,” a poem by Sandra Cisneros**

**My Wicked, Wicked Ways**

This is my father.

See? He is young.

He looks like Errol Flynn.

He is wearing a hat

that tips over one eye,

a suit that fits him good,

and baggy pants.

He is also wearing

those awful shoes,

the two-toned ones

my mother hates.

Here is my mother.

She is not crying.

She cannot look into the lens

because the sun is bright.

The woman,

the one my father knows,

is not here.

She does not come till later.

My mother will get very mad.

Her face will turn red

and she will throw one shoe.

My father will say nothing.

After a while everyone

will forget it.

Years and years will pass.

My mother will stop mentioning it.

This is me she is carrying.

I am a baby.

She does not know

I will turn out bad.

* From *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* – Third Woman Press, 1987

**Questions for Group Discussion**

* What is the “setting” in the poem?
* What is going on “behind the scenes”?
* How do you feel about the speaker’s father?

**Source #1:** Biographical Information



**Sandra Cisneros**

Born in Chicago in 1954.

Lived in one of Chicago’s poorest neighborhoods.

Was the third of seven children, and the only girl.

Lived in a male-dominated family.

Felt she was “the isolated one” in her family.

Father was an upholsterer.

Claims she found her inspiration when she decided she “wanted to write something my classmates couldn’t.”

Earned an MFA from the University of Iowa in 1978, at the age of 24.

“My Wicked, Wicked Ways” is the title of Errol Flynn’s autobiography, an expose of Hollywood and the reality behind his cheerful public persona.

* From “Sandra Cisneros: Border Crossings and Beyond” by Robin Ganz. *MELUS*. Vol. 19, No. 1

**Source #2:** Excerpts from Interviews with Sandra Cisneros

“I didn’t want my mother’s life. She was an unhappy, frustrated artist who always dreamed of a life that was never going to be hers. I didn’t want to be married with seven kids and wish, oh, if only I had done this. I didn’t want that. So, my dream was to mother a book.”

“My father always defined my gender to my brothers. He’d say, ‘This is your sister; you must take care of her.’”

“The only reason we write—well, the only reason why I write; maybe I shouldn’t generalize—is so that I can find out something about myself. Writers have this narcissistic obsession about how we got to be who we are. I have to understand my ancestors—my father, his mother and her mother—to understand who I am.”

* From The Missouri Review (Issue 25.1) and Chicago Public Library

**Source #3**: Literary Criticism

The title is alluding to the ‘scandalous’ autobiography of Errol Flynn. Cisneros may appreciate the honesty with which Flynn opens up about his sexual exploits and other dastardly dealings in his life. By using this title she is moving the speaker into a similar position of honesty about sexual matters that Flynn moved into in the 1950s. The last lines build this idea with "She does not know/I will be bad" (Cisneros, 30-31). Cisneros is saying that the speaker and Flynn are bad because they are undermining the patriarchy through honest discourse on sex.

* From “Feminist Critique of ‘My Wicked, Wicked Ways’ by Sandra Cisneros” by Alex Almeida

**Research Guide**

**Google Scholar example**

**(pay attention to publication dates, and look for material that is available for you to read as a whole document)**

Cisneros, Sandra. *A House of My Own: Stories from My Life*. Vintage, 2015.

Annotation – This book is a collection of essays written by Cisneros that covers her whole life, starting with her childhood in Chicago. I am using it in my essay because it allows me to expand upon what we learn about her family through the poem.

**School library example**

**(same as above, but unlike Google Scholar make sure to filter out nonacademic sources)**

Socolovsky, Maya, and Initiative American Literatures. *Troubling Nationhood in U.S. Latina*

*Literature : Explorations Of Place And Belonging*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2013. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost). Web. 13 Feb. 2017.

Annotation – This book includes essays from a wide variety of Latina authors and also includes critical commentary of the authors, the essays, and their work. This book helps us better understand the cultures and literary traditions Cisneros is a part of.

**Regular internet search example (beware!)**

Vasquez, Tina. “A Chat with Sandra Cisneros, Beloved Author and Patron Saint of Chingonas.”

*Jezebel.com*. 7 Oct. 2015. Web. 8 Feb. 2017.

Annotation – This interview covers some of Cisneros’ new work, her life in Mexico, and her reflections on a career spanning over thirty years. I am using it because it sheds light on her adult life and goes into depth about her current projects and career circumstances.

**Some research tips**

.edu = educational institution

.gov = government website

.org = nonprofit (not always)

.com and .net = beware! Lots of bad/nonacademic stuff

Scholarly articles tend to have abstracts – use this to determine how appropriate the source is for your paper

Make sure your information is timely (in other words, unless you have a good reason, try to find current information)

Check to see if there is an organization responsible for the accuracy of the information

Is this a primary source? If not, what is, and why are you using this source instead?