

USING QUOTATIONS

Direct quotations are used in literary analysis, research papers and other writing to illustrate a point, to convey information, to substantiate a point by using the words of an accepted authority or to amplify a discussion by presenting alternative viewpoints. Quotations provide important support of your ideas. However, **quotations can only be illustrations of analysis you provide. Quotations cannot function as analysis by themselves.** Do not string together a mass of quotations with only a sentence or two of your own writing to move readers from one to the next. Your original discussion and explanation of points must be the bulk of your writing, with quotations serving to enhance your writing, not replace it.

After choosing to use a given passage, you must determine whether the excerpt should be paraphrased or quoted directly. A careful paraphrase that does complete justice to the source is often preferable to a long quotation; however, literary analysis might require more extensive use of direct quotation to support your interpretation.

In general, direct quotations should be used either when the exact words of a writer are absolutely essential, or when a significant thought has been expressed with unusual force or appropriateness. Do not quote material which would be just as effective without being directly quoted.

bad ex. Citizens of the United States are energy gluttons. "The United States consumes about fifty percent of the energy produced world-wide each year" (Boyd 53).

The information provided in the quotation above is certainly important to illustrate the point. However, there is nothing about the wording of the statement that makes it worthy of direct quotation. The important statistic should be worked into the discussion, while still being attributed to Boyd.

Furthermore, quotations should not be repetition of ideas stated directly.

bad ex. Tom complains that Amanda constantly nags him: "Why do you always nag me?"

Finally, an excerpt quoted in a paper should be as short as possible. Only the essence of a long quotation need be directly quoted in your paper; the extraneous part of the source may be paraphrased as a lead-in or deleted through ellipses (...). Eliminate any material from a quotation that might tend to obscure rather than illuminate your point.

Punctuation and Style of Quotations

Most short quotations (four lines or fewer) are placed within the text, after being properly introduced.

ex. As Pablo explained to Harry in the Magic Theater, "True humor begins when man ceases to take himself seriously" (609).

Long quotations (longer than four lines in your paper) should be indented ten spaces from the left margin, with no extra indentation used for a quoted beginning of a paragraph. Long quotations are introduced by a colon (:) and are not set off by quotation marks. For example:

Yossarian's irreverence is illustrated in the opening scene:

As an officer, Yossarian had the duty of censoring the letters the enlisted men wrote home. Yossarian found that he could significantly shorten the time each day he had to spend on this task by establishing patterns for his censorship. One day, he censored every other line of each letter. The next day, he declared death to all modifiers, putting a thick black line through every adjective, adverb and article. (2)

However, if the quoted material is within quotation marks in the source, then the quotation marks must be retained.

Use long quotations sparingly; they bog the reader down (no matter how nicely they pad the length of your paper.) As mentioned earlier, use ellipses to shorten your quotations when appropriate.

Try to introduce a quotation by integrating it into the sentence structure or by setting up the quotation. Don't just use "He said" or "For example" all of the time.

ex. Unfortunately, life is more complicated than a Bruce Springsteen song; we can't always "play some pool, skip some school, act real cool, stay out all night" and we certainly do not always feel alright.

ex. Owen makes his contempt for the suitor clear when he advises John, "Ask him if he wants to catch a ball, then aim right for his face" (232).

A more abrupt introduction can be effective if used sparingly. This type of introduction eliminates the "he said" reference and the placement of the quotation within the source. Instead, it joins the set up of the quotation directly with the quotation by use of a colon. With such an introduction, the example immediately above would be:

Owen makes his contempt for the suitor clear: "Ask him if he wants to catch a ball, then aim right for his face" (232).

Any directly quoted material must be reproduced exactly in all details--spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing and wording. Use this symbol-- [sic] --to show that you know an error or a use of substandard English exists in the quoted material, but the error is the original author's, not yours.