



Using Quotations As Support

Quotations add authority to your argument

Indirect quotations paraphrase another's words

Direct quotations use the exact words of someone else

There's an art to choosing just a few powerful quotes and placing them seamlessly into your analysis.

- Don't use quotes for ideas that you could just as easily put in your own words.
- Use quotes ONLY to support, prove, or reinforce your own ideas.
- Never use a quote without immediately explaining it. Introduce the quote with an explanation (generally, who said it and under what circumstances) and explain it afterwards.
- As a general rule, avoid long quotations. Stick to quoting a sentence or a phrase.
- Don't over-quote and don't use quotes to pad your essay. Choose them carefully.
- The best quotations are incorporated and made a part of your own sentence! Do not let a quote stand alone as its own sentence.

Examples

AWFUL: ~~Biff thinks Willie's dreams of success are distorted. "Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?" (Miller 111).~~

- This fails to introduce the quote properly, and does not fully connect the quote to the sentence before it.

NICE: ~~By the end of the play, Biff cries out to Willie, "Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?" (Miller 111). He is trying to tell Willie that Willie's distorted idea of success can only lead to tragedy.~~

- Notice how the quote is introduced - who says it, and when - and how it is embedded into the sentence. Also notice how the importance of the quote is explained in the sentence immediately following it.

Methods for Successful Quoting

1. The set-up, quote, and explanation method:

When Danforth explains why he will not delay the trials, he says, "Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part" (Miller 10). Thus, Danforth is more concerned with appearing in control than in finding the truth.

2. The quote, set-up, and explanation method:

"I say... God is dead" (Miller 12), says Proctor angrily to Danforth, but what he means is the spirit of truth and justice is nowhere to be found in Salem.

3. The bits and pieces method (the most sophisticated). In this method, you incorporate bits and pieces of quotes into your own sentence:

Proctor must fight Danforth's contention that "the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children" (Miller 84); however, this is a battle he cannot win, for Danforth closemindedly assumes that "all innocent and Christian people are happy for the courts in Salem" (Miller 88).

Pay Attention to Punctuation and Referencing!

"Quotes" are used for literary support; "Dialogue" is used in stories to report words spoken aloud.

Situation	Quotes	Dialogue
Placing quotation marks	Around direct quotes: "Parting is such sweet sorrow."	Around directly-quoted dialogue: "Parting is such sweet sorrow."
Info added to clarify, explain, or alter	Use square brackets: "Parting [leaving] is such sweet sorrow."	N/A
Omission	Use ellipses when omitting part of a quote: "Parting is...sorrow."	N/A
Tag line (words identifying speaker) after quotation	No comma is needed: "Sweet sorrow" is an oxymoron.	Use a comma inside the quotation marks: "Parting is such sweet sorrow," she sighed.
Tag line before quotation	No comma is needed: An example of an oxymoron is "sweet sorrow".	Place a comma after the tag line: She said, "Parting is such sweet sorrow."
Tag line interrupts quotation	No commas are needed: "Parting" is "sorrow".	Use commas to separate the two parts: "Parting," she mused, "is such sweet sorrow!"
Quotation is a question or exclamation	Include the ? or !: "Parting?" was his last question. "Such sorrow!" was her reply.	Use ? or ! instead of a comma or period: "Parting?" he asked. "Such sorrow!" she called.
Comma refers to whole sentence	Goes on the outside of the quote: If you say "sweet sorrow", be sure to sigh.	N/A
Final punctuation refers to the whole sentence	Put it outside the quotation mark: I can't believe it—she said, "sweet sorrow"!	N/A
Poetry line breaks	Indicated by a forward slash: "I am a rock / I am an island"	N/A
Referencing prose	Put the author's last name and page number in parentheses: (Twain 42)	N/A
Referencing a play	Use Act.Scene.Line instead of page number: (Shakespeare II.i.42)	N/A
Referencing poetry	Use the author's last name and line number: (Nash line 10)	N/A
Referencing more than one source by the same author	Use a shortened version of the title, also: (Romeo Shakespeare 11.i.42)	N/A