Integrating Quotations into Your Work

Direct quotations include any narration or dialogue taken word-for-word from the text. These are used to **SUPPORT** your arguments, not to fill up space in your essay. A quotation should **NEVER** be left standing alone as a complete sentence or, worse yet, as an incomplete sentence. A quotation that is standing all by itself is like a helium balloon that flies away when not tied down; *the significance and relevance of a quotation is lost on your reader if it is not "held down" by your own words.* The quotation will seem disconnected from your own thoughts and from the flow of your sentences.

Readers should be able to move from your own words to the words you quote without feeling a JOLT. Below are ways to integrate quotations into your own sentences.

1. **Introduce the quotation with a complete sentence and a colon.**

**Example**: In *The Chrysalids,* Wyndham begins the story with a dream that perplexes the protagonist: “When I was quite small I would sometimes dream of a city—which was strange because it began before I even knew what a city was” (5).

**Example**: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states directly his purpose for going into the woods: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

**Example**: Thoreau ends his essay with a metaphor: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in."

This is an easy rule to remember: if you use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation, you need a colon after the sentence. DO NOT to confuse a colon **(:)** with a semicolon **(;)**.

1. **Use an introductory or explanatory phrase (these usually end in verbs), but not a complete sentence, separated from the quotation with a comma.**

**Example** David’s innocence and naiveté is illustrated when he states, “the ways of the world were very puzzling” (14).

**Example**: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states directly his purpose for going into the woods when he says, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

**Example**: Thoreau suggests the consequences of making ourselves slaves to progress when he says, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."

Use a comma to separate your own words from the quotation when your introductory or explanatory phrase ends with a verb such as "says," "thinks," "believes," "ponders," "recalls," "questions," “claims,” “implies,” "asks" (AND MANY MORE).

1. **Make the quotation a part of your own sentence WITHOUT any punctuation between your own words and the words you are quoting.**

**Example**: Readers know David receives a terrible beating as “it was Mary who came and made little whimpering noises as she dressed [his] back” (52).

**Example**: Thoreau suggests the consequences of making ourselves slaves to progress when he says that "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."

**Example**: Thoreau argues that "shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous."

Notice that the word "that" is used in two of the examples above, and when it is used as it is in the examples, "that" replaces the comma *which would be* necessary without "that" in the sentence.

1. **Use short quotations—only a few words—as part of your own sentence.**

**Example** Though David knows a “blasphemy” is “hateful in the sight of God,” he is “perturbed and considerably puzzled” because “Sophie is simply an ordinary little girl (13-14).

**Example**: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states that his retreat to the woods around Walden Pond was motivated by his desire "to live deliberately" and to face only "the essential facts of life."

**Example**: Thoreau argues that people blindly accept "shams and delusions" as the "soundest truths," while regarding reality as "fabulous."

When integrating quotations this way, do not use any special punctuation; instead, punctuate the sentence just as you would if all of the words were your own. No punctuation is needed in the sentences above because the sentences do not follow the pattern explained in methods **1** and **2**: there is not a complete sentence in front of the quotations, and a word such as "says," "said," or "asks" does not appear directly in front of the quoted words.

**5. Block Quotations—quotations that are longer than four lines in the original text**

The above methods are for short quotations (between 1-4 lines). When your quotation is **longer than four lines of text**, we use a block quotation. These should only be used if the long quotation is *absolutely necessary* as supporting evidence.

**Example** In trying to dissuade David from running away, Uncle Axel tells him about the scarcity of the Fringes:

Man alive, you’d not want to go to the Fringes. Why, they’ve got nothing there—not even enough food. Most of them are half starving. That’s why they make the raids. No, you’d spend all your time there just trying to keep alive, and lucky if you did (56).

Notice how in a blocked quotation there is NO NEED for quotation marks (“ ”).

🡪 IMPORTANT: A general rule to remember with quotations is: **NEVER** leave a quotation (either embedded or blocked) hanging; do NOT end a paragraph with a quotation. Introduce the quotation as support for a claim/statement/assertion, and then *follow* the quotation with some analysis. Your analysis connects your quotation to your claim and to your topic sentence or thesis. The analysis that follows a quotation is where you show your brilliance. You let the reader know that you have done more than just read the play/novel/essay etc., you have thought about its implications or deeper meanings.

🡪 Essentially you have to explain how/why your chosen quotation supports or proves your position (what you are trying to argue).

**6**. **Paraphrasing—sometimes you can quickly summarize a quotation and then cite**

**Example** The reader learns David has received a terrible beating from his father because when Mary dresses his back, she makes crying sounds (52).

***When supporting your claims in and essay or paragraph, avoid relying too much on just ONE method and aim to use a variety of methods.***

LASTLY: **do not** be redundant with quotations; quotations should support your ideas, NOT mirror or restate them.

**Example** After David receives a terrible beating it is Mary who comes and helps him: “it was Mary who came and made little whimpering noises as she dressed my back” (52).

*A matter of style*

* avoid breaking words at end of line (this is a publisher’s affectation used to conserve paper).

- Use **verbs of analysis** to analyze your quotation. (e.g, illustrates, highlights, reveals, etc.). These

are pasted on two of our walls!

* avoid contractions in formal essays (can’t, don’t, it’s, etc…), simply spell out the words (cannot, do not, it is, etc).
* avoid Latin abbreviations (etc. vs.) in formal essays. The UN, the US, the CIA, however, are acceptable.
* always let your reader know who is speaking your chosen quotation.
* write all quotations in quotation marks (“ ”) UNLESS the quotation is a blocked quotation.
* Make sure you CITE the page number. For plays, you cite the act, scene, and then line # (for example: 3.2.140-145).
* Remember that a quotation cannot be a sentence, therefore carefully lead into your quotation.
* avoid commencing sentences with quotations.
* *Italicize* the title of a play or any other bound (with cover) work, novels, anthologies (of short stories, poetry), movies, newspapers.
* Put poetry titles, short story titles, magazine article titles, newspaper article titles, etc. and other works that appear as a piece in a larger work in quotation marks (“ ”).
* Avoid absolutes in criticism: “never,” “proves,” “always,” “automatically,” “perfectly;” there is generally room for flexibility, try “suggests,” “is possible,” “proposes,” “perhaps.”
* Use ellipses (…) only in the *middle* of a quotation, never at the start or end of one.
* Always use present tense in an analysis. Treat the work as if it were *alive.*
* Avoid colloquialisms and basic words “thing” (use “aspect,” “feature,” or be specific, “place,” “character”)
* In formal essays, avoid using “I think,” “in my opinion,” “I believe”—it’s your essay, of course it’s what you think.
* No such phrases as “could of”, “should of”, etc. in the English language, “could have” or “should have” are acceptable.
* Avoid “based off of” use “based on” instead
* Avoid using the following line “the dictionary defines *x* as….”
* Analyse, never merely retell the plot of the play.
* Lastly, every body paragraph must have a concluding sentence that ties ideas in the paragraph back to the thesis
* THINK, PROVE, EXPLAIN, EDIT