

NOTES ON QUOTES

USING QUOTE EFFECTIVELY WHEN WRITING YOUR ACADEMIC PAPERS/LITERARY ANALYSES

Most students are good at identifying and quoting passages to support their arguments. However, **one of the biggest problems that students have is that far too often the evidence they choose does not actually support the thesis, OR does not do so in a clear way.**

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You need to be careful to find the best evidence to support your thesis.

- If you can't find evidence that really supports your thesis, you probably need a new thesis (more likely, you just needed to look a little bit harder).
- If you find good textual examples that I did not use as examples in the lecture/class discussion, this will be likely to improve your grade, though you should be aware of all the material we discussed collectively as well.

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Beyond just **finding the right evidence**, you need to **always explain how your evidence proves your thesis**.

Logically, how does this quote prove the main point you claim the text is making?

You can't assume your reader can connect the quote and the thesis. **You need to do so yourself.**

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A good way to make sure you are using quotations effectively is to think of it as a **3-part process** I call **"The ICE Rules"**:

I

INTRODUCE

Introduce the quotation smoothly, typically by referencing the speaker and/or situation of the quotation.

You will want to set up **context** for your reader by making clear **WHEN** and **WHERE** in the story we are, **WHO** is talking and **WHAT** is happening.

Note: if this is the first time you are referencing the text you should introduce the source, the author and a quick summary (this may take one or two sentences to do effectively)

C

CITE

Cite the source. Don't forget the point of the quote is that it **supports the argument** you pose in your thesis.

End the citation with a correct **MLA parenthetical citation** that corresponds to your Works Cited/ Bibliography page

Note: To avoid a "dropped quotation", be sure to lead into the quote with an introductory phrase that denotes who is speaking.

E

EXPLAIN

Explain why this moment/quote is important and significant, as well as **its relevance to your thesis and your paragraph topic**.

A good explanation should be at least three sentences-- longer depending on the length of the quoted text. Consider beginning the first sentence of your explanation with "this quote illustrates", and your second with "this is significant because..."

Note: You will not want to use these sentence openers every time or your paper will sound robotic and repetitive--make sure to vary your language before submitting!

ICE RULES IN ACTION

EXAMPLE THESIS:

James Joyce's short story, "The Dead," notes how all of us have a tendency to view other people as "objects," and ourselves as subjects. That is, while we think of ourselves as complex, multifaceted individuals, we have the tendency to see other people as mere supplements to our existence, there to lend flavor and intrigue to our own lives, rather than having complete interior lives of their own. The story warns us against viewing others in this way and suggests that we will never truly know ourselves until we make the attempt to see others in ways as complex as we see ourselves.

Each paragraph I would construct for this paper would include evidence of **Gabriel "objectifying" other people OR would show how Gabriel eventually realizes his mistake and is then able to "grow" as a person, or face the truth about himself**. In the latter case, I would need to show both that Gabriel finally does acknowledge the complexity of another and that this somehow leads to "growth" on his part. I would need quotations to show this and an explanation of the quotations that indicate how the quotes indicate growth.

EXAMPLE SUPPORTING PARAGRAPH THAT USES I.C.E RULES

There are many moments throughout "The Dead," wherein Gabriel views other people, even those he loves or to whom he is close, as "objects," whether "artistic" or sexual **[I]** One key example is near the close of the party, when Gretta Conroy descends the stairs in preparation for leaving. At this moment, Gabriel looks up at her and ruminates about what he sees: **[C]** "There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude...Distant Music he would call the picture if he were a painter" (Joyce 47). **[E]** While it might initially appear that this is simply an instance wherein Gabriel looks at and appreciates the beauty of his wife, it is also true that Gabriel here has no sensitivity to Gretta's interior life. As we later learn, at this moment, Gretta is undergoing emotional turmoil related to the recollection of her relationship with the young Michael Furey, her "first love." None of this seems to matter to Gabriel, however, as he mentally transforms her from a three-dimensional person into a two-dimensional painting, an art-object which may be beautiful but which has no interior life, emotions, or memory. As in his treatment of Lily, Gabriel shows a lack of sensitivity to the complexity of another person, a practice which not only damages his personal relationships, but also ultimately proves to be a barrier to his personal growth. As we shall later see, it is only when he is forced to view Gretta as a "self" or a "subject," that he can begin to move toward a more complete understanding of himself.

Notice that **the explanation in the above example paragraph is probably more important than the quote**. If you can explain why the quote proves your thesis you are in good shape. If you never logically connect your evidence and your thesis, no matter how good your quote is, your argument will fall short. Avoid plot summary for the sake of summary. If an episode is important to your argument, you can describe it and explain why it proves your thesis. Paraphrases of passages and summaries of events should be cited also (Furman 12). **Citations are not just for quotations!**

NOTES ON OTHER THINGS

- **Be careful when including connections to outside world:** While this is important, confine it to the introduction and conclusion. The majority of your paper (the body) should prove your point about the text. Too many outside examples can distract your reader from the thesis and textual evidence.
- **MLA citation style:** "This is simple, just author's name and page number, nothing else, punctuation follows the parentheses. Like so" (Cassanetti 10).
- **MLA style bibliography:** If you are using *any* outside sources, you need a bibliography. It should be an MLA style Works Cited Page. Look it up. If you get this wrong, points will be taken off.
- **MLA Formatting:** Title of books and movies should be italicized or underlined (As *I Lay Dying*). Titles of short stories should be put in quotation marks ("To Build a Fire"). Again, these are MLA rules.
- When referring to your primary text, use present tense, "Gabriel looks up at her." Not: "Gabriel looked up at her." It's just a rule! Follow it, please.
- **Use transitions! Every paragraph should start with a word or phrase that makes it clear how this paragraph relates to the previous one.** "Another example of Gabriel's egotism is..." or "Although Gabriel is egotistical for most of the story, he eventually begins to change..." or "As we have seen already, Gabriel has a tendency to objectify those around him," or "Gretta, like Lily,..." etc. These phrases... "Another, Although, As we have seen, like, etc." set up a **relationship** between what has come before and what is to come. **They help your reader summarize where you have been and anticipate where you are going, clarifying your argument.**

FOR MORE HELP USING QUOTES EFFECTIVELY IN YOUR ACADEMIC PAPERS, LOOK FOR THESE OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES ON YOUR COURSE CANVAS PAGE!

FOR COMPOSITION CLASSES

(ENC1101, 1102, & 1939)

- **WORKSHEET:** Step-by-step guide to Writing Strong Body Paragraphs
- **HANDOUT:** Writing Thesis Statements/The Thesis Test
- **INFOGRAPH:** Avoiding Logical Fallacies
- **INFOGRAPH:** The MLA Cheat Sheet

FOR INTERPRETATION CLASSES

(LIT2010 & 2070)

- **WORKSHEET:** Step-by-step guide to Writing Strong Body Paragraphs
- **HANDOUT:** Writing Thesis Statements for Literary Analysis
- **HANDOUT:** Summary vs. Analysis
- **INFOGRAPH:** The MLA Cheat Sheet

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ADOPTED FROM A. FURMAN'S "NOTES ON QUOTES" HANDOUT