

NAME: _____ PERIOD: _____ DATE: _____

How to Use Textual Evidence in the Body of a Literary Analysis

USING TEXTUAL EVIDENCE:

The skillful use of textual evidence -- summary, paraphrase, specific details, and direct quotations -- can illustrate and support the ideas you are developing in your essay. However, textual evidence should be used judiciously and only when it directly relates to your topic. The correct and effective use of textual evidence is vital to the successful literary analysis essay.

Summary:

If a key event or series of events in the literary work support a point you are trying to make, you may want to include a brief summary, making sure that you show the relevance of the event or events by explicitly connecting your summary to your point. Below is an effective summary (with its relevance clearly pointed out) from the essay already used on "The Secret Lion":

Example:

The boys find the grinding ball, but later attempt to bury it (SUMMARY). Burying it is their futile attempt to make time stand still and to preserve perfection (RELEVANCE).

Paraphrase:

You can make use of paraphrase when you need the details of the original, but not necessarily the words of the original: paraphrase to put someone else's words into your own words. Below is an example (*also from "The Secret Lion"*) of how to "translate" material into part of your own paper:

Example:

ORIGINAL: "I was twelve and in junior high school and something happened that we didn't have a name for, but it was nonetheless like a lion, and roaring, roaring that way the biggest things do."

PARAPHRASE: Early in the story, the narrator tells us that when he turned twelve and started junior high school, life changed in a significant way that he and his friends could not quite name or identify.

Specific Details:

Various types of details from the text lend concrete support to the development of the central idea of your literary analysis essay. These details add credibility to the point you are developing. Below is a list of some of the details which could have been used in the body paragraph from the essay on "A & P", and you can see the paragraph again for which details were used and how they were used:

Examples:

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|---|
| - "usual traffic" | - "checkerboard green-and-cream rubber-tile floor" | - shoppers like "sheep," "house slaves," and "pigs" |
| - "fluorescent lights" | - "electric eye" | - dynamite |
| - neatly stacked food | | |

Sammy's descriptions of the A & P present a setting that is ugly, monotonous, and rigidly regulated. The chain store is a common fixture in modern society, so the reader can identify with the uniformity Sammy describes. The fluorescent light is as blandly cool as the "checkerboard green-and-cream rubber tile floor" (486). The usual traffic in the store moves in one direction (except for the swim suited girls, who move against it), and everything is neatly organized and categorized in tidy aisles. The dehumanizing routine of this environment is suggested by Sammy's offhand references to the typical shoppers as "sheep," "house slaves," and "pigs" (486). These regular customers seem to walk through the store in a stupor; as Sammy indicates, not even dynamite could move them out of their routine (485).

Direct Quotations:

Quotations can illuminate and support the ideas you are trying to develop. A smart use of quoted material will make your points clearer and more convincing. As with all the textual evidence you use, make sure you explain how the evidence is relevant—let the reader know why the quotes you cite are significant to your claim. Below are guidelines and examples to help you effectively use quotations:

- (1) Brief quotations (*4 lines or less*) should be carefully introduced and integrated into the text of your paper. Put quotation marks around all briefly quoted material.

- *Example:*

As the "manager" of the A & P, Lengel is both the guardian and enforcer of "policy" (487). When he gives the girls "that sad Sunday-school-superintendent stare," the reader becomes aware of Lengel's character as the A & P's version of a dreary bureaucrat who "doesn't miss much" (487).

Make sure you give page numbers when necessary. Notice that in this example the page numbers are in parenthesis after the quotation marks but before the period.

- (2) If any words are added to a quotation in order to explain who or what the quotation refers to, you must use brackets to distinguish your addition from the original source.

- *Example:*

The literary critic John Strauss asserts that "he [Young Goodman Brown] is portrayed as self-righteous and disillusioned" (10).

Brackets are used because there is no way of knowing who "he" is unless you add that.

- (3) Brackets are also used to change the grammatical structure of a quotation if needed.

- *Example:*

Strauss also argues that Hawthorne "present[s] Young Goodman Brown in an ambivalent light" (10).

Brackets are used here to add the "s" to the verb "present" because the sentence would not be grammatically correct otherwise.

- (4) You must use ellipsis (*three periods with a space between*) if you omit any words from the original source you are quoting. Ellipsis can be used at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the quotation, depending on where the missing words were originally.

- *Example:*

Original: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

Omission at Beginning: This behavior ". . . makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Omission at Middle: Support shows "Early to bed . . . makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Omission at End: He said, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy"