

Using Quotations Effectively in Literary Analysis

Tip #1: When inserting quotations from a text to support your own analysis of that text, introduce the quote by identifying the speaker and the situation in which it takes place.

Selections from The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury

EXAMPLE: In short story “ABC,” the whole town is in mourning. Bradbury describes the scene saying, “From every house in the street came little solemn processions bearing long boxes, and along the sun filled streets, weeping, came the grandmas and mothers and sisters and brothers and fathers, walking to the churchyard, where there were new holes freshly dug and new tombstones installed” (47). When a whole town is in mourning, every person is connected to the tragedy. This can bring a community together, even if it’s for a sad reason. People need other people when they’ve suffered a tragedy.

Tip #2: A more sophisticated way to insert the quote is to “weave it” into a sentence of your own.

EXAMPLE: In short story “ABC,” Bradbury describes the whole town in mourning when he explains that “from every house in the street came little solemn processions bearing long boxes, and along the sun filled streets, weeping, came the grandmas and mothers and sisters and brothers and fathers, walking to the churchyard, where there were new holes freshly dug and new tombstones installed” (47). When a whole town is in mourning, every person is connected to the tragedy. This can bring a community together, even if it’s for a sad reason. People need other people when they’ve suffered a tragedy.

Tip #3: An even more sophisticated technique is to weave *only part* of a quotation. A quotation should be four (4) or five (5) words or more, but not too long. Let’s say you only want to use part of a longer quotation:

EXAMPLE: In short story “ABC,” Bradbury describes the whole town in mourning when he explains that “from every house in the street came little solemn processions bearing long boxes ...” (47). When a whole town is in mourning, every person is connected to the tragedy. This can bring a community together even if it’s for a sad reason. People need other people when they’ve suffered a tragedy.

Overview: In the above examples, the writer examines how a shared experience can create a unique bond among those who shared it and illustrates this point by including a quotation, folded into a sentence of the writer’s own devising. The writer is considerate of the reader by setting the quotation in its proper context and identifying the speaker. The writer also comments on the quotation, analyzing it, revealing why it is included, and relating it to the overall topic.

Writing Strategy:

- Answer—*In short story “ABC,” Bradbury describes the whole town in mourning...*
- Identify the speaker and situation--*Bradbury describes...*
- Citation (that proves or backs up the answer)—“ from every house in the street came little solemn processions bearing long boxes ...” (47).
- Documentation of the quotation—Notice that the parenthesis and page number(s) go ***IMMEDIATELY AFTER*** the end of the quotation. Also notice that the end punctuation goes ***IMMEDIATELY AFTER*** the parenthesis.
- Explanation—*When a whole town is in mourning, every person is connected to the tragedy. This can bring a community together even if it’s for a sad reason. People need other people when they’ve suffered a tragedy.*

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Three other points about using quotations are important to understand:

1. Brackets
2. “Emphasis added” Italics
3. Ellipses

Brackets:

If the writer of the piece wants to insert text not in the original quote, he or she can do so using brackets, which show that the originator of the quotation did not say or write the bracketed text. Be sure to restrict the use of this technique to making surface changes—changes that don’t alter the meaning or significance of the quote—such as changing the verb tense or capitalization of the quotation to agree with that of the writing piece. Moreover, sometimes this technique is useful when the writer wants to use only a part of the quotation and the meaning needs clarification.

EXAMPLE: When Clark and Burns ask those concerned about the issue to “calm down and examine [the problem],” their diction serves as a moderating force in the angry debate about cloning.

“Emphasis Added” Italics:

In addition, if the writer wants to emphasize something inside the quote, he or she can use italics to do so, but must add the phrase “emphasis added” to clarify the fact that the italics were not in the original passage.

EXAMPLE: When Clark and Burns asks those concerned about the issue to “*calm down and examine*” (emphasis added) the issues involved in cloning, their diction serves as a moderating force in the angry debate between proponents and opponents.

Ellipses:

Finally, if the writer wants to leave out part of the quotation, he or she will want to insert ellipses (...) to show that some text has been omitted.

EXAMPLE: The noted cloning experts from Jones University, Clark and Burns, comment on the matter in their speech at Warren Medical Center last May. When asked how some applications would be found for the new technology, they replied, “We won’t know...until people calm down and examine the issue logically.”