

Lesson Plan: Incorporating Quotations

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Lesson: Incorporating Quotations

Note to instructor: This lesson would be most helpful if students came to class with an essay prompt and sources they will be drawing from.

Timeframe: approximately 50 minutes

Target Audience: Lower-division college or university students first learning to use borrowed material in their writing.

Materials needed: 3 whiteboard markers, copy of lesson (below)

Objectives: After the lesson, students will be able to

- create a quote “sandwich” that effectively introduces and explains the material they have borrowed.
- create and employ templates to assist them in introducing and explaining quotations.
- recognize and repair common errors in incorporating quotations.

Background: All college or university students, at some point, will have to use borrowed material in their writing. While there are three ways to use borrowed material (quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing), students often use direct quotes to support their assertions. Incorporating borrowed material is a requirement in lower-division writing courses – classes that every student must take to graduate. However, students in the humanities and sciences alike will have to use this skill throughout college, and often in their careers.

Introduction to Lesson [5 minutes]:

In college, you will have to write many essays on many different subjects. Each time you write an essay, you are entering into an academic dialogue that contains a past, present, and future. All of us in this classroom are a microcosm of what you will encounter when taking a position on any topic: some people will accord your view, some will vehemently disagree with you, and others will take a stance somewhere in between. In other words, your opinion does not exist in a vacuum: not only do others endorse views apart from yours, but the dialogue about this topic has often been going on for some time without you, and will continue to go on after you finish your essay/class/college. Kenneth Burke, in “The Philosophy of Literary Form” uses a metaphor he calls the “unending conversation” to explain this idea:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too

heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

By incorporating the views of others, through quotations, you are acknowledging the larger academic dialogue of your topic and engaging in that dialogue. In other words, you are joining the party.



Procedure [40 minutes]:

Step 1: Why we use quotes [~3 min]

We incorporate quotations from other writers to support our own assertions. The borrowed material does not necessarily need to agree with what we have to say, but we use it as a form of “evidence” or “proof” of our arguments. You want to use quotes when what is said is

- so impressive that to put it into your own words would lessen the impact.
- so detailed that putting it into your own words would change the meaning.
- so concise that your own paraphrase would be twice as long as the original passage.

Step 2: The quote sandwich [5 min]

The quotation that you choose to support your point is important, but what you surround it with—your introduction and analysis—is equally important so that your reader knows why the quote is there and how it is strengthening your ideas. In order to integrate a quote smoothly, and make clear *how* that quote functions to support your assertions, create a quote “sandwich.”

THE INTRODUCTION—The Bread
Introduce the quote by making a statement about the point that the quote supports. The quote is supplementary to your own ideas.

THE QUOTE ITSELF—The Meat
Make sure the quote is relevant and necessary.

THE FOLLOW-UP—The Bread
Follow the quote with analysis that expresses the significance of the quote and why you chose to use it.

Graphic compliments of Sarah Prasad

Step 2A: Introducing the quote [5 min]

The first time you refer to a source in your paper, introduce the author and text that the quote is from.

Here are 3 ways to introduce a quote:

1. Introduce the quote with a signal phrase.

In Notes of a Native Son, James Baldwin asserts “...”

Verbs that you can use to introduce the quotation:

observes	states	wonders	points out
suggests	argues	comments	convinces
claims	relates	persuades	protests
offers	asserts	contends	proves
analyzes	investigates	reviews	justifies
defends	disputes	ponders	recounts
explains	says	asks	tells us

2. Use a colon to introduce your quote.

At this point Baldwin became frightened and worried: “I begun to realize I was in a country I knew nothing about, in the hands of a people I did not understand at all” (Baldwin 144).

3. Use a quote to finish a sentence you begin.

He did not know what to expect from the French people because he “had no grasp of the French character” (Baldwin 142).

Step 2B: Explaining the quote [5 min]

After you have introduced the quote and inserted it, you must explain its significance. Why is it relevant? How does it strengthen what you have to say? Do not assume the significance is so obvious that you do not have to discuss it. Quotes that are missing this explanation are often called “dangling” or “hit-and-run” quotes.

Baldwin asserts that “we had no way of controlling the sequence of events and could not possibly guess what this sequence would be” (Baldwin 147). With this statement Baldwin clearly demonstrates his lack of familiarity and therefore comfort with the situation he finds himself in.

Step 3A: Quote templates [5 min]

To get in the habit of framing your quotes, it is helpful to have some generic templates to draw from for the quote’s introduction and explanation. Let’s revisit the example for our first method of introducing a quote, using a signal phrase:

In Notes of a Native Son, James Baldwin asserts “...”

The template for this would read

In [source], X asserts “_____.”

Or, if you have already introduced the source:

X asserts “_____.”

Explanation templates can work the same way. The explanation template in our example above would read

With this statement, X clearly demonstrates _____.

*Idea for “quote templates” is from *They Say / I Say* by Graff & Birkenstein

Step 3B: Group work [15 min]

Get in groups of 3 or 4. Take approximately 5 minutes to generate one (or more) introduction template/s and one (or more) explanation template/s. When you are finished, nominate one member of your group to come up and write your templates on the board.

Note to instructor: While the groups are working, visit each one and answer any questions they might have. Once everyone has written their work on the board, ask the students which template they feel is the best (for each category). Discuss why. Also, you may notice incorrect uses of the colon; this is a good platform to remind them, briefly, of how the colon functions. If the templates are too similar (e.g. all the introduction templates are simply signal phrases with different verbs), work with the students to come up with other formulations.

Step 4: Common errors [~7 min]

1. The most common mistake students make when trying to incorporate quotes is failing to explain them adequately.

In almost every state, gay couples cannot marry. This means that they cannot receive the legal benefits that a married couple is given when they marry. In "What is Marriage?" Evan Wolfson details some of these benefits: "If a couple is not married and one partner dies, the other partner is not entitled to get bereavement leave from work, to file wrongful death claims, to draw the social security payment of the deceased partner, or to automatically inherit a shared home, assets, or personal items in the absence of a will" (39). Not many people believe that not being able to be married is a big deal.

While this student has done a good job of introducing the quote, he/she does not explain the importance the information in the quote. Why are these benefits important? What does this mean? So what?

*In almost every state, gay couples cannot marry. This means that they cannot receive the legal benefits that a married couple is given when they marry. In "What is Marriage?" Evan Wolfson details some of these benefits: "If a couple is not married and one partner dies, the other partner is not entitled to get bereavement leave from work, to file wrongful death claims, to draw the social security payment of the deceased partner, or to automatically inherit a shared home, assets, or personal items in the absence of a will" (39). **In other words, gay couples are at a severe economic disadvantage by being prohibited from marrying legally. The financial ramifications of not inheriting a partner's assets could cause them to lose their home, or their livelihood.***

2. Another common error when quoting is indicating that the author of the borrowed material is doing the quoting, when in fact it is you (the student) who is quoting the author.

Marriage in the United States is motivated primarily by love, but there are also several legal benefits that are associated with marriage. As quoted by Evan Wolfson, "Because it is a legal or 'civil' institution, marriage is the legal gateway to a vast array of protections and benefits" (36). Through this statement, it is evident that married heterosexual individuals not only receive the satisfaction of

being legally bonded to their significant other, but they are also blessed with benefits from the government.

In this example, the author of the quote (Evan Wolfson) does not quote himself (“As quoted by Evan Wolfson “ ___”). Rather, *you* (the student) are quoting *him*.

*Marriage in the United States is motivated primarily by love, but there are also several legal benefits that are associated with marriage. **Evan Wolfson defends this:** “Because it is a legal or ‘civil’ institution...”*

Closure/Evaluation [5 minutes]:

Homework: Practice making sandwiches. Choose relevant quotes from a source that you will use in your next essay. Using the templates created in class today, make 4-5 quote sandwiches.

Note to instructors: This homework assignment/activity can be based on whatever reading you’ve assigned, or whatever essay the students are currently working on. The homework assignment can then be integrated into the rough draft of their essay.

Lesson Analysis:

Formulas, like the templates in this lesson, are always helpful to students learning how to do anything for the first time. That said, this lesson might be most helpful when taught with specific sources that students are required to borrow from in a specific assignment. Other related lessons: citing sources, choosing relevant material to borrow, and determining the quantity of borrowed material to use.

Sources:

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