

# Using Textual Evidence in Essays

Of course, there is a great deal involved in using textual evidence, but this short list will serve our present purpose. The key point to remember is that your use of other texts is not limited to quoting from authors with whom you agree (though this will be the most common use). You can use other texts

- as sources of evidence
- as objects of analysis
- as sources of data or information
- as authorities to support your claims
- as representatives of opposing points of view

There are three main ways to use evidence or examples from a text to illustrate your own points in an essay. They are:

1. Making a reference to the author or the text
2. Paraphrasing/summarizing the author by telling about the ideas or story in your own words
3. Directly quoting from the text

When you first refer to, paraphrase/summarize or quote from another work you should try to incorporate into your sentence the full name of the author and the title of the text. Subsequent references to the same work and author can use the last name of the author or the title of the text. For example:

In “I wandered lonely as a Cloud,” William Wordsworth shows the reader the value of natural places in our lives. The poem shows how some “golden Daffodils” help him feel joyful because of their “dancing in the breeze.”

In the above example, the first sentence is a reference to both the author and the text. The second sentence includes two brief quotations. Note that when you quote the title, you must quote it as written. Normally, the words “wandered” and “lonely” would also be capitalized, but because Wordsworth did not capitalize them, neither should you. Here are a few more examples of using text:

<b>Reference</b>	Eric Davidson, author of <i>You Can't Eat GNP</i> , argues that we should not separate the environment from economics.  Reporter Kenneth Reich shares several plans to improve the Los Angeles River (“Many Bridges to Cross to Revive L.A. River”).
<b>Paraphrase or Summary</b>	According to Lewis MacAdams and Robert Gottlieb, two activists regarding the future of the Los Angeles River, many developers would like to turn the land near Chinatown into industrial areas with many warehouses (“Changing River’s Course: A Greenbelt vs. Warehouses”).
<b>Direct Quotation</b>	Wordsworth shows how nature can be valuable even when we are not near it when he explains how sometimes when he is feeling “vacant” or “pensive,” he sees the daffodils in his mind’s eye, and then his heart “dances with the Daffodils.” This shows how the flowers can have the same effect on him long after he has first seen them.  Canada knows it will not be easy, but the difficulty should not stop us from starting now. "If we were fighting an outside enemy," he notes in his conclusion, "that was killing our children at a rate of more than five thousand a year we would spare no expense" in ending the threat. "What happens," asks Canada, "when the enemy is us?" (167).

## A Few Cautions

There are a few points to remember when using text to illustrate your point:

- While someone else's words can really help you make your point, the reader is most interested in **your** words, so make your references, paraphrases and quotes relatively brief.
- Integrate direct quotes into the language (i.e. grammar and verb tense) of **your writing**.
- Choose what you want to use **carefully**. Make sure you need it to illustrate your point, and then make sure that you provide the context necessary for the reader to understand how the material illustrates that point.
- Always cite the text and author you are using. Failure, even if unintentional, to properly acknowledge someone else's words or ideas is plagiarism.
- Always introduce the author and text. Make sure it is clear to the reader who is speaking and whose ideas you are showing. Tell us why we should care about who this person is and what this person has to say. Once you have introduced the author, refer to the author by the author's last name.
- If the grammar (especially verb tense and pronouns) of the quotation does not fit the grammar of your writing, change it to fit the grammar of your writing, putting the changed word(s) in brackets. For example:

Later, when Wordsworth thinks about the daffodils, "then [his] heart with pleasure fills" and he feels the same joy he felt when he first saw them.

## Citing Sources in the Text

Paraphrased citations should be as brief and as few as possible. This means it is best to incorporate the author(s) and the work into the content of the sentence so that all that is left is to include a page number at the end. For example:

For Canada, the entertainment industry has given in to greed. They have recognized that "the more graphic the 'action' the more tickets will be sold" (164).

**Note that the page number is enclosed in parentheses and that the punctuation which belongs to the sentence is placed after the citation. However, note the last example in the Direct Quotation box on page 1 where the question mark is placed inside the closing quote mark, followed by the parenthetical page reference, following by an ending period.**

**Also, a quoted phrase inside of your quote should be marked by single quote marks ('action' in the above sentence).**

**Please note that book titles, newspapers and journals should be underlined or italicized, and poem and article titles should be placed in quotation marks.**

**Please note that all words in titles should be capitalized except for articles and prepositions, unless the title was not written that way originally. The first word should be capitalized even if it is an article or preposition.**