

Discussing Quotations Worksheet
Created by Karin Spirn

A strong paragraph discussing a quotation usually contains most or all of the following elements:

1. A topic sentence that tells the main point you'll make in the paragraph
2. Some background information about the quote so that the reader is not at all confused about what the quote means
3. An explanation of the argument you are making about the quote (if you don't include this first, your readers will need to re-read the quote later once you make your point)
4. A signal phrase identifying the author or speaker of the quote
5. The quote, with quotation marks and a parenthetical page citation. You should provide enough of the quote that it makes sense, but don't put in more than you can discuss. One or two sentences is generally a good quote length.
6. A paraphrase of the quote (put it in your own words) after you present it to make sure readers understood the quote in the same way you did
7. A few sentences explaining your point about the quote, why you draw that conclusion about the quote, and how that quote supports your essay's thesis
8. A final sentence reminding readers of your paragraph's main point

While these are elements of a strong quote-analysis paragraph, it is often difficult to write the paragraph in this order. This worksheet will help you write a paragraph analyzing a quotation. You will write the second half of the paragraph first, and then go back and fill in the opening of the paragraph.

Step 1: Start halfway through

(4) and (5) Choose a quotation that you would like to discuss in your paper. Introduce the quotation with a signal phrase naming the author or speaker. Then write your quotation, with quotation marks and a parenthetical page citation (or other citation if you are using a style other than MLA). You should provide enough of the quote that it makes sense, but don't put in more than you can discuss. One or two sentences is generally a good quote length.

(6) Paraphrase the quote (put it in your own words) right after you present it to make sure readers understood the quote in the same way you did. Remember that a paraphrase must use totally different words and structure from the original quote.

Continued

(7) Explain your view of the ideas in the quotation. How do you react to the quote, or what would you like readers to notice about it, and why? Explain in a few sentences. (Hint: don't write, "I would like readers to notice..." Just start explaining your idea. If you do write an opening like that, take it out later).

(8) Sum up the most important idea from your discussion of the quote to make a strong paragraph ending.

Step 2: Add the paragraph opening

(1) What was the main point you made about the quote in section (7)? That is the main point of your paragraph. Write that main point as a topic sentence for your paragraph. (Hint: Don't write, "My main idea is..." Just say what it is).

(2) Give some background about the quote. If your paper is not all about one text, tell us who wrote the quotation. If your paper is about a single text, then tell us what part of the text you are discussing and what is going on in that part.

(3) What argument are you going to make about your quotation specifically? Do you agree with it or disagree with it? What do you want readers to notice about it?

continued

Step 3: Put it all together

Now write out the paragraph by filling in your answers to the numbered questions on the pages above.

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

(7)

You're finished! You can use this paragraph in your paper.