

Integrating and Explaining Quotations

Integrating

When answering questions, composing paragraph responses, and writing literary essays you are always required to explain your answers and provide proof supporting your ideas. One of the best ways to do this is by including quotes from the novel, story, or poem that you are writing about. It is important to integrate your quotations to add clarity, flow, evidence, and a command of language to your writing.

Often, students will write their own sentence and then include a quote directly after it.

For example:

Miss Strangeworth is validated and takes meaning from writing her letters. “As long as evil existed unchecked in the world, it was Miss Strangeworth’s duty to keep her town alert to it” (Jackson 253).

Or sometimes...

Miss Strangeworth is validated and takes meaning from writing her letters as proven by the quote, “As long as evil existed unchecked in the world, it was Miss Strangeworth’s duty to keep her town alert to it” (Jackson 253).

However, this is how it is done:

Miss Strangeworth is validated and takes meaning from writing her letters because she feels that “as long as evil existed unchecked in the world, it was [her] duty to keep her town alert to it” (Jackson 253).

- Make the quote part of your own sentence
- Cite it properly according to MLA rules: author (if unmentioned in the sentence) and page number
- Indicate any changes to words (tense, pronoun, etc.) by putting square brackets around the changes
- Indicate words omitted by using ellipses (...) to show where the words were
- Refer to literature in the present tense

Practice

Incorporate parts of the following quotes into your own sentence about the topic.

Topic One: By using non-descript paper to write her letters, Miss Strangeworth is acknowledging by the omission of her identity that what she is doing is wrong.

Quote: "...everyone in town bought it and used it for odd, informal notes, and shopping lists" (Jackson 252).

Topic Two: Miss Strangeworth is inherently evil.

Quote: "Miss Strangeworth liked writing her letters" (Jackson 253).

Explaining Quotations

Some students think that after they have put in a quote then they are finished. What makes the discussion of the topic analytical is when you explain why your evidence proves what you have to say and furthermore, why that is important.

For Example:

Miss Strangeworth is inherently evil as "[she] liked writing her letters" (Jackson 253). The fact that the letters are evil in as much as they bring misery to others demonstrates that Miss Strangeworth takes pleasure in creating distress and anguish. It is only someone who is truly malicious and spiteful who would take time out of her day to not only listen to and judge the actions of others, but also to feel as if she stands on superior moral ground and thus can expose others for her subjective view of what actions are evil.

Practice

Incorporate parts of the following quotes into your own sentence about the topic and explain the importance of the idea you are giving evidence to.

Topic One: Miss Strangeworth has a twisted view of what evil is.

Quote: "Miss Strangeworth never concerned herself with facts; her letters all dealt with the more negotiable stuff of suspicion" (Jackson 252).

Topic Two: Miss Strangeworth is overly concerned about the actions of others.

Quote: "[Mrs. Harper's] hand shook slightly as she opened her pocketbook. Miss Strangeworth wondered, glancing at her quickly, if she had been taking proper care of herself" (Jackson 250-251).

Hint: It is not her business to be involved in the affairs of others. Why does she care?
