

## The Use and Abuse of Quotations

Quotations can be an effective tool for supporting your arguments, but only when used *sparingly* and *appropriately*. The purpose of a quote is to demonstrate a point you are making in your analysis of the author or subject.

### Common Issues and Their Solutions

ISSUE	SOLUTION
<p>Quoting someone else’s view and thus avoiding doing your own interpretive analysis.</p> <p>Ex. The Cadillac syndrome “states that nouveau intellectuals—very much like the nouveau riche in feeling insecure about their rank in the community—will seek conspicuous proof of their arrival” (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 6).</p>	<p>Use your own words and analysis wherever possible, only quoting where the author’s words are significant for your point.</p> <p>Ex. The use of fancy speech, frequently unclear, could be the result of upwardly mobile but insecure people attempting to seem more intellectual than they feel they are—what Bruce Price calls “the Cadillac Syndrome” (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 6). But there may be deeper causes. . . .</p>
<p>Assuming that the quote is self-evident proof of something, when it actually is only one view of the subject.</p> <p>Ex. (found at the beginning of a paragraph): “Society is founded on hero worship” (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 91). Thus, the great man is the most important aspect of a civilization. . . .</p>	<p>Always analyze the perspective or bias of the source and its use of evidence. Quote the author as evidence of your analysis of their interpretation.</p> <p>Ex. In support of heroes as central to human history, Carlyle opens his essay with the claim that “society is founded on Hero-worship” (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 91). He supports this contention with. . . .</p>
<p>Quoting obvious and well-known pieces of information. (NOTE ON PLAGIARISM: You give credit for original ideas and interpretations whether quoted or summarized, but commonly known information need not be cited.)</p> <p>Ex. As for the Hellenistic economy, “agriculture continued to be the basic source of wealth in the Hellenistic world” (Harrison, Sherman, and Sullivan 1993, 92).</p>	<p>Use your own words, linking the information to your analysis of its significance. Avoid quoting textbooks.</p> <p>Ex. While the Hellenistic era is known for its greater trade and wealth, its economy was still based in agriculture.</p>

<p>Quoting too much of a passage.</p> <p>Ex. The Egyptian hymn to Aton shows the monotheism of Akhnaton’s reign:  How manifold it is, what thou hast made!  They are hidden from the face of man.  O sole god, like whom there is no other!  Thou didst create the world according to thy desire,  Whilst thou wert alone... (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 40).</p>	<p>Only quote enough to prove your point; then summarize the rest.</p> <p>Ex. The hymn to Aton shows clearly Akhnation’s monotheism, when he exclaims: “O sole god, like whom there is no other” (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 40).</p>
<p>Misusing a quote by taking it out of context, improperly interpreting it, or misquoting.</p> <p>Ex. Claudius claimed that Italy was “not so decayed that it cannot provide her own capital with a senate,” arguing for native Roman senators (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 115).</p>	<p>Always check and double check your quotes and their context.</p> <p>Ex. The emperor Claudius contradicted the argument that Italy was “not so decayed that she cannot provide her own capital with a senate,” claiming that Rome needed to bring in good senators from whatever background (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 115).</p>
<p>Repeating the quote instead of analyzing it.</p> <p>Ex. The emperor Claudius contradicted the argument that Italy was “not so decayed that she cannot provide her own capital with a senate,” claiming that Rome needed to bring in good senators from whatever background (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 115). He did not agree that only native Roman senators could be relied upon.</p>	<p>Check to make sure your analysis tells us something that is not explicitly stated in the source.</p> <p>Ex. The emperor Claudius contradicted the argument that Italy was “not so decayed that she cannot provide her own capital with a senate,” claiming that Rome needed to bring in good senators from whatever background (Drake and Jeedom 2002, 115). However, that brings into question what it means to be a good senator and whether it was the fault of the senate that Italy had “decayed” or whether Italy’s decay had resulted in worse senators, in which case the focus should instead be on...</p>

The examples above were taken from History 4A texts:

Drake, H.A., and J.W. Jeedom. 2002. *Laws, Gods, & Heroes*. Kendal Hunt Publishing.

John, Harrison, Dennis Sherman, and Richard Sullivan. 1993. *A Short History of Western Civilization*. McGraw Hill.