

## Using Quotations in Literary Analysis

Using quotations is one of the best ways to strengthen your expository writing. Quotations can help support and reinforce your opinions by providing evidence from the text. As a writer, your goal should be to weave the author's quotation smoothly into your own prose. The following three steps will help make this possible:

1. **Lead in** to the quotation by giving some background. Explain the scene. Who's talking or narrating?

Before the climactic scene in the New York hotel, Gatsby tells Nick that "[Daisy's] voice is full of money"(127).

2. **Lead out** from the quotation by explaining its significance. How does it support your thesis statement? Why is it important?

When Tom is driving Nick and Jordan home, after stopping at the scene of Myrtle's death, Nick "heard a low husky sob and saw that the tears were overflowing down [Tom's] face"(149). Tom's tears demonstrate a genuine affection for Myrtle that he had not revealed previously.

3. **Embed** the quotation into your own sentence. Often you will need to use a comma ( , ) or a colon ( : ) to make the quotation flow easily into your writing.

Using a COMMA...

When presented with the extravagance of Gatsby's clothing, Daisy says, "It makes me sad because I've never seen such – such beautiful shirts before"(98).

Using a COLON...

Fitzgerald uses figurative language in *The Great Gatsby* to highlight the gravity of Gatsby's disappointment: "He had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night"(189).

## What to do:

- **Quote exactly and accurately.** Use an ellipsis (...) to indicate if you have left out any words. Use square brackets [ ] to indicate if you have added or changed any words in order to make the quotation fit your sentence.
- **Cite the page number** so that another person could find the reference. Follow the format used above.
- When **quoting dialogue** within a section of text, use single quotation marks:  
At the party, Nick doesn't realize that the man he's sitting with is Gatsby: "I turned again to my new acquaintance. 'This is an unusual party for me. I haven't even seen the host. I live over there'- I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, 'and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation'"(52).
- When **using a quotation that is longer than three typed or written lines**, indent from both sides, single space, and do NOT use quotation marks.

Nick's attraction to Jordan seems to have intensified during the course of the evening at Gatsby's party.

It was dark now and as we dipped under a little bridge I put my arm around Jordan's golden shoulder and drew her toward me and asked her to dinner. Suddenly I wasn't thinking of Daisy and Gatsby any more but of this clean, hard, limited person who dealt in universal skepticism and who leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm(84).

This is a rare moment where the reader sees Nick's individual interests, instead of his opinions about Gatsby and those who surround him.

## What not to do:

- Don't "plop" a quotation down without any background or explanation.
- Don't start or end a paragraph with a quotation.
- Don't include quotations that are insignificant.
- Don't use the word "quotation" in your essay. It calls unnecessary attention to the transition between your writing and the author's writing. Avoid phrases such as "This quotation shows..." or "This quotation means..." Instead, use the character's name. (Nick implies that..." or Gatsby demonstrates..." )