

Using quotations effectively¹

Homework

Submit all homework assignments on Canvas as a Word (.doc or .docx) file. So that I can grade anonymously, **please do not include your name** or any other identifying information.

In addition, some exercises include a word limit or word range. For these exercises, strive for concision and simplicity (while still using complete sentences), and **include a word count** for each of your answers.

Exercise 1. Carefully review my comments on your previous homework submission, as well as the answer key.

- (a) What are the most important mistakes that you made? If you did not make any mistakes on the homework, instead tell me the most important mistakes that you made in seminar. (Range: 30-60 words.)
- (b) What specific strategies can you use to avoid such mistakes in the future? Remember to apply these strategies to the rest of this homework! (Range: 30-60 words.)

Exercise 2. Carefully review my comments on your paper, as well as the sample papers.

- (a) Tell me how long you spent reading and digesting my comments on your paper. (You should spend a bare minimum of 20 minutes doing this.)

I spent __ minutes on this task.

- (b) What is the most important mistake that you made in your paper? What is one specific strategy that you can use to avoid this mistake on your next paper? (Range: 30-75 words.)
- (c) What is one important lesson that you learned from the sample papers? Be as specific as possible, and make sure to focus on a lesson that you can apply to your next paper. (Range: 30-60 words.)

Exercise 3. From 2.11-2.13 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna argues that Arjuna should not grieve for those whom he might kill in battle. Diagram that argument using an argument form that we have studied. Remember to include both a numbered list of claims and a picture with one or more arrows.

¹ I have drawn the main ideas in this handout from Cathay Liu's handout, "Framing quotations."

Though quotations are typically an indispensable part of the evidence for any textual interpretation, a quotation *by itself* is rarely of much value. To use a quotation effectively, I recommend that you follow these five steps (not necessarily in order!):

1. *Select* the quotation.
2. *Incorporate* the quotation.
3. *Cite* the quotation.
4. *Explain* what the quotation means.
5. *Relate* the idea expressed in the quotation to your larger point.

Below each of these steps is explained in detail. As you read these explanations, think about which steps you tend to omit and focus especially on those.

1. Select the quotation.

To keep your writing focused, choose the *shortest* quotation that will support your point, using ellipses (“...”) to replace unnecessary material. However, you may use the occasional lengthier quotation to emphasize a particularly central passage. Such **block quotations** must be placed in a separate indented paragraph.

2. Incorporate the quotation.

Do not simply drop the quotation in a stand-alone sentence. Instead, incorporate the quotation into a complete sentence of your own, making it clear who is speaking. You might use phrases like “According to *x*, ...,” “*x* suggests [/states/holds/maintains] that ...,” or “As *x* remarks, ...”

3. Cite the quotation.

For *each* quotation used, include a footnote identifying the relevant author/editor, year of publication, and page number(s). Also cite the work itself in a separate section at the end of your paper entitled “References” or “Works cited.” See the sample papers for examples of proper citation practices.

4. Explain what the quotation means.

Identify any ideas expressed in the quotation whose meanings are not obvious, and carefully explain the meanings of those ideas. Remember, however, not to explain the obvious!

To explain what a quotation means, you will often need to break the quotation into smaller parts, explain the meaning of each part, and only then pull together the meaning of the entire quotation. Use signposting phrases like “Here *x* claims that ...,” “By this, *x* means that ...,” and “*x*’s central idea is that ...” I especially recommend the signposting phrase “In other words, ...”

5. Relate the idea expressed in the quotation to your larger point.

Depending on the purpose of your paper, you may need to identify the evidence for the idea, indicate how the idea supports the author's conclusion, show how the idea fits into your interpretation of the author, or criticize the idea. Remember to use signposts to indicate exactly what you are doing.

Warm-up exercises

First complete all but the last of these exercises on your own. Then check your answers against the answer key that is included at the end of this handout, and use what you have learned to complete the last exercise. Finally, submit all of your answers on Canvas as a Word (.doc or .docx) file.

Some exercises include a word limit or word range. On these exercises, strive for concision and simplicity (while still using complete sentences), and **include a word count**. So that I can grade anonymously, **please do not include your name** or any other identifying information.

Warm-up 1. Consider the following excerpt from a paper, which effectively follows the five steps for using quotations. For each of the five steps, identify the precise part of the excerpt that incorporates it.

Laozi claims that “A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.”² On my interpretation, the “Way that can be followed” is the true Way, i.e., the enigmatic source of all things. The purpose of Laozi's observation that the Way is inconstant is to emphasize the inadequacies of language: language can only adequately characterize what is constant, so it is not adequate to characterize the Way.

1. *Select* the quotation: ____.
2. *Incorporate* the quotation: ____.
3. *Cite* the quotation: ____.
4. *Explain* what the quotation means: ____.
5. *Relate* the idea expressed in the quotation to your argument or interpretation: ____.

Warm-up 2. In chapter 14 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna describes the three qualities of nature: goodness, passion, and dark inertia. Explain whether Krishna views the quality of goodness as ultimately good, ultimately bad, or neither. (You might find it helpful to know that some translators call this quality “purity” rather than “goodness.”)

Make sure that you incorporate several short quotations into your explanation, using all five steps described in this handout. For each quotation used, mark each step with the appropriate number in brackets – “[1],” “[2],” etc. (Range: 150-190 words.)

Warm-up 3. Carefully review the answer key for the warm-up exercises. Then answer the following questions.

² Ivanhoe and Van Norden (2001, p. 163).

- (a) What are the most important mistakes that you made? If you did not make any mistakes, then instead reflect on the most important mistakes that you recently made in seminar. (Range: 30-60 words.)
- (b) What specific strategies can you use to avoid these mistakes in the future? (Range: 30-60 words.)

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| Sample answers to warm-up exercises |
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Warm-up 1. Consider the following excerpt from a paper, which effectively follows the five steps for using quotations. For each of the five steps, identify the precise part of the excerpt that incorporates it.

Laozi claims that “A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.”³ On my interpretation, the “Way that can be followed” is the true Way, i.e., the enigmatic source of all things. The purpose of Laozi’s observation that the Way is inconstant is to emphasize the inadequacies of language: language can only adequately characterize what is constant, so it is not adequate to characterize the Way.

1. *Select* the quotation: “A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.”
2. *Incorporate* the quotation: “Laozi claims that ...”
3. *Cite* the quotation: The footnote after the quotation includes the citation.
4. *Explain* what the quotation means: “On my interpretation, the ‘Way that can be followed’ is the true Way, i.e., the enigmatic source of all things.”
5. *Relate* the idea expressed in the quotation to your argument or interpretation: “The purpose of Laozi’s observation that the Way is inconstant is to emphasize the inadequacies of language: language can only adequately characterize what is constant, so it is not adequate to characterize the Way.”

Warm-up 2. In chapter 14 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna describes the three qualities of nature: goodness, passion, and dark inertia. Explain whether Krishna views the quality of goodness as ultimately good, ultimately bad, or neither. (You might find it helpful to know that some translators call this quality “purity” rather than “goodness.”)

Make sure that you incorporate several short quotations into your explanation, using all five steps described in this handout. For each quotation used, mark each step with the appropriate number in brackets – “[1],” “[2],” etc. (Range: 150-190 words.)

According to Krishna, there are three qualities of nature: goodness, passion, and dark inertia. The latter two qualities are clearly destructive. Surprisingly, however, Krishna also views the quality of goodness as ultimately bad, even though it is instrumentally useful in ridding oneself of certain attachments.

In particular, [2] Krishna holds that the quality of goodness [1] “binds one by (creating) attachment to happiness and to knowledge.” [3]⁴ [4] In other words, even the quality of goodness creates *some* kind of attachment, which will trap the soul [5] in the cycle of death and rebirth. At the same time, however, [2] Krishna suggests that [1]

³ Ivanhoe and Van Norden (2001, p. 163).

⁴ Maitra (2018, p. 132).

“[f]rom goodness knowledge is born,”⁵ [4] meaning that a person with the quality of goodness will be able to learn the ethical and metaphysical truths that will help to free her from attachments. [5] Eventually, she may even be able to become free of goodness itself, thereby achieving enlightenment. (161 words)

For your reference, here is a version of the same second paragraph without any numbering:

In particular, Krishna holds that the quality of goodness “binds one by (creating) attachment to happiness and to knowledge.”⁶ In other words, even the quality of goodness creates *some* kind of attachment, which will trap the soul in the cycle of death and rebirth. At the same time, however, Krishna suggests that “[f]rom goodness knowledge is born,”⁷ meaning that a person with the quality of goodness will be able to learn the ethical and metaphysical truths that will help to free her from attachments. Eventually, she may even be able to become free of goodness itself, thereby achieving enlightenment.

⁵ Ibid, p. 133.

⁶ Maitra (2018, p. 132).

⁷ Ibid, p. 133.