

Using Quotes Effectively: Close Reading

The basics: 9th grade quote style, aka the quote sandwich

1. Sub-topic sentence
2. Context
3. Quote (or sometimes 2-3 closely related quotes)
4. Analysis. Discuss the effect or meaning of the quote, in relation to the sub-topic and thesis.

The next step: close reading

1. Include/incorporate key words and phrases from the quote in your analysis, exploring how they add power or meaning. Doing this effectively often involves:
2. Weaving quotes in. Make the quote part of the context or analysis sentences.

Tips:

- Remember what readers want from analysis. Good analysis helps a reader ...
 - o feel the effect or power of something he would not have otherwise felt
 - o or see the deeper meaning of something he would not have otherwise understood
 - o or see why something that *seems* true actually IS true (at least from your point of view)
- Keep the quotes short by only quoting relevant parts of a passage. Don't bore the reader with useless information. If you are not going to explore it, don't quote it.
- When you weave quotes in, they can be part of an analysis sentence or part of a context sentence, or sometimes even both.
- You only need to use quotes **when the way something is said has an impact on its effect or meaning**. Otherwise, use a short summary of relevant facts and analyze them.
- Analysis is **not** merely restating the quote in your own words or claiming that the quote proves something. Analysis is showing how & why a quote proves something.

Sample close reading and quote weaving paragraph

In Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, Jean Louise "Scout" Finch recalls a summer when she was little girl, which she spent tagging along with her beloved older brother Jem. Early in the story, Scout and Jem meet a new boy, named Dill. Scout immediately starts to make fun of him, but then in her words, "Jem told me to hush, a sure sign that Dill had been studied and found acceptable." This paragraph explores the meaning in that quote:

Jem's influence over Scout and Scout's word choice when describing him show in a funny way that he is the hero of her childhood world. His influence is clear in their first conversation with Dill. When Scout embarrasses Dill by calling him out on his lies about his father, Jem tells Scout to "hush." Scout's doglike obedience of this one word command shows Jem's power over her, as does Scout's decision to befriend Dill simply because *Jem* approved of him. Scout's exact wording in describing this moment also shows her worship. She does not say that Jem studied Dill, but that Dill "had been studied." Scout's use of passive voice makes Jem's judgments feel like the pronouncements of a faceless authority in the sky. Her choice of the word "sign," which reminds of us signs from god, does the same. Once the "sure sign" floats down from above, Scout feels no choice but to obey it. In fact, she obeys it to such an extreme that she even becomes "engaged" to Dill, the surest "sign" of all that to Scout, Jem's heroic word is law. What's funny about Scout's larger-than-life view of Jem is that Jem is really just an obnoxious, show-offy nine year old boy. Her comical, unquestioning willingness to view him as a god clearly shows how she lives in that special little world called childhood.