Informal Assignment 4: Paraphrasing Workshop

English 103 | Tuesday, October 27 | Reading: Lawrence, chapter 19

Today, your group practices the art of paraphrasing: restating a writer's ideas in your own words and your own sentences, keeping the meaning, and giving the writer credit. Thursday's Writing Studio workshop builds on this work.

Before You Start

- One person makes a copy of this document in Google Docs and shares it with everyone in the group.
- Type directly in the document. **Never paste a passage into an answer box and edit it.**
- Do not use generative AI or paraphrasing tools of any kind.
- Start every paraphrase with the author's name. (You do not need a formal citation today.)
- Before you leave, share the document with hwells1@esu.edu as an **editor**, not a viewer or commenter.

Warm-Up: Which One Would You Turn In?

Talk this through as a group; there is nothing to type here. Read the original, then the four attempts to paraphrase it. Which would you turn in if the assignment is an academic essay? For each of the others, say exactly what is wrong with it.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations* (2023), p. 14.

> At its heart, AI is a highly advanced mathematical toolkit for building and using models. Indeed, in well-known chatbots, complex essays are written one word at a time. The underlying AI model predicts which next words would likely follow the text written so far; AI chatbots use a very large statistical model to add one likely word at a time, thereby writing surprisingly coherent essays.

Attempt A. At its core, AI is a very sophisticated math toolkit for constructing and using models. In fact, in popular chatbots, complicated essays are produced one word at a time.

Attempt B. According to a 2023 U.S. Department of Education report, AI is essentially advanced math for building models. A chatbot's statistical model keeps predicting the likeliest next word and adding it, one at a time, until the essay holds together better than you might expect.

Attempt C. Underneath every chatbot is advanced mathematics. A huge statistical model guesses the likeliest next word, adds it, and repeats until the essay hangs together surprisingly well.

Attempt D. The U.S. Department of Education warns that chatbot essays only look organized. In reality, they are random words strung together by a math formula.

Part 1: Passage 1, Together (10 minutes)

Work this passage as a whole group. Read it until everyone feels they are able to explain it. Then cover it, talk it through out loud, and write one group paraphrase together from what you said. Uncover the passage and check your version before you finish.

Passage 1: Frederick Douglass

About the source: Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) escaped slavery in 1838 and became one of the most influential abolitionists and writers of his time. Here he describes how, as an enslaved boy in Baltimore whose enslavers had forbidden anyone to teach him, he learned to read.

Source: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845), chapter 7.

Words/phrases you may need: sent of errands (sent on errands); bestow upon (give to); urchins (poor, ragged children).

> The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly,

I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge.

Table 1. Passage 1: the group's paraphrase.

Item	Your answer
Group paraphrase (start with Douglass's name)	
Any phrase you kept in quotation marks, and why	

Parts 2 and 3: Passages 2 to 5 (24 minutes)

Part 2: draft alone (12 minutes). Split Passages 2 to 5, one per person. If your group has five people, two of you draft Passage 5 separately and compare. If your group has three, draft the leftover passage together after Part 3. Read your passage until you could explain it, cover it, and write your paraphrase from memory, starting with the author's name.

Part 3: swap and check (12 minutes). Check someone else's draft against the original and write your notes in the "Checker's notes" row. Ask yourself:

- Does it mean the same thing as the original, in the same tone?
- Has anything been added or left out?
- Is the sentence structure new, or just the words?
- Is the author named?
- Underline any three or more words in a row copied from the original. Names, numbers, and technical terms don't count.

Then the writer revises in the last row.

Passage 2: The Nation's Report Card

About the source: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also called the Nation's Report Card, tests a national sample of students. The National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education, released these 2024 results for twelfth graders in September 2025.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, “NAEP Report Card: Grade 12 Reading,” National Trends and Student Skills page (2025), nationsreportcard.gov.

> Thirty-five percent of twelfth-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level on the reading assessment in 2024—two percentage points lower compared to 2019 and 5 percentage points lower compared to 1992, the first reading assessment year. . . . Students performing at or above the NAEP Proficient level on NAEP assessments demonstrate solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter. It should be noted that the NAEP Proficient achievement level does not represent grade-level proficiency as determined by other assessment standards (e.g., state or district assessments).

Table 2. Passage 2: draft, check, and revision.

Item	Your answer
Drafted by	
Paraphrase (from memory, starting with the agency’s name)	
Checked by	
Checker’s notes	
Revised paraphrase	

Passage 3: U.S. Department of Education

About the source: This is the same report as the warm-up passage. The Department's Office of Educational Technology wrote it after a series of listening sessions in 2022 attended by more than 700 people.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations* (2023), pp. 1–2.

> Educators are also aware of new risks. Useful, powerful functionality can also be accompanied with new data privacy and security risks. Educators recognize that AI can automatically produce output that is inappropriate or wrong. They are wary that the associations or automations created by AI may amplify unwanted biases. They have noted new ways in which students may represent others' work as their own.

Table 3. Passage 3: draft, check, and revision.

Item	Your answer
Drafted by	
Paraphrase (from memory, starting with the report's author)	
Checked by	
Checker's notes	
Revised paraphrase	

Passage 4: John Stuart Mill

About the source: John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was a British philosopher and economist. In *On Liberty*, he argues for freedom of thought and discussion.

Source: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), chapter 2, “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion.”

Words/phrases you may need: refute (prove wrong or at least questionable); the generality (most people); inclination (leaning or preference).

> He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion. The rational position for him would be suspension of judgment, and unless he contents himself with that, he is either led by authority, or adopts, like the generality of the world, the side to which he feels most inclination.

Table 4. Passage 4: draft, check, and revision.

Item	Your answer
Drafted by	
Paraphrase (from memory, starting with Mill’s name)	
Checked by	
Checker’s notes	
Revised paraphrase	

Passage 5: Henry David Thoreau

About the source: Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) was an American essayist who spent two years living in a cabin he built near Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. *Walden* is his account of those years.

Source: Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854), chapter 3, “Reading.”

Words/phrases you may need: paltry (small, trivial); cipher (do arithmetic); lulls (soothes to sleep); suffers (allows, permits); faculties (abilities).

> Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing; yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to.

Table 5. Passage 5: draft, check, and revision.

Item	Your answer
Drafted by	
Paraphrase (from memory, starting with Thoreau’s name)	
Checked by	
Checker’s notes	
Revised paraphrase	

Part 4: Reflect (5 minutes)

As a group: which passage was hardest to paraphrase? What made it hard: the vocabulary, the length of the sentences, the ideas, or something else? Answer in two to four sentences.

Table 6. The group's reflection.

Item	Your answer
Hardest passage, and why	

Individual Contribution Record

The group document receives one grade. Individual grades are adjusted from that grade using what is recorded here, so record what you did.

Vague: "Helped with the passages." **Useful:** "Drafted Passage 4, checked Passage 2, and suggested which phrase to quote in Passage 1."

Credit for an informal assignment requires that you be marked present for this class period. Contributions made from outside the classroom do not earn credit.

Table 7. Individual contribution record.

Name	Passages you drafted and checked	What you contributed, specifically

Before You Leave

Share this document with hwells1@esu.edu as an editor before the end of the period. Thursday's Writing Studio workshop covers citations, plagiarism, quoting, paraphrasing, and AI; read the Lawrence chapter, and bring one question about citing sources.