

Background: For your observation paragraphs, you are using quotations mostly to directly prove your thesis statement. However, direct textual support (quotations) can be used in a variety of ways rather than simply as proof. For your importance paragraphs, your quotations will be used as a means to explore your importance topic. They are a starting point that allows you to make insights about the importance of your initial observation. This is a common use of quotations that you have most likely noticed from your critical reading. You will also notice that you have a greater responsibility in explaining the connections between the quotations you've selected and how they tie into your importance ideas. Because thinking about each importance quotation is so important, you should have completed the importance paragraph thinking activity before you can write your importance paragraphs.

Your check point will only need to present an analysis of ONE of your three importance quotations. Your final paper will have an importance paragraph that addresses THREE quotations.

My example paragraph will provide you with two examples, just so you can see the process happen more than one time.

Importance Paragraph Assignment:

MLA Heading

Observation: (list briefly)

Plan of Attack Points:

Importance: (list briefly)

Thesis: (Write your thesis as it is currently phrased)

Example Importance Paragraph, in MLA format (for the most part)

Last Sentence of Preceding Observation Paragraph:

.... In his selfish and opportunistic treatment of Pap, Huck reveals his vampire-like behaviors.

Importance Paragraph:

By establishing Huck's relationship with Pap as fundamentally vampire-like, Twain parallels

Huck's opportunistic treatment of his father with that of a Southern society that still uses

African-Americans for its own pleasure and gains. As Julius Lester comments:

Jim is a plaything, an excuse for "the adventure of it," to be used as it suits the

fancies of the white folk, whether that fancy be a journey on a raft down the river or a torchlight parade. What Jim clearly is not is a human being, and this is emphasized by the fact that Miss Watson's will frees Jim but makes no mention of his wife and children. (345)

In identifying Jim as essentially a toy, something intended to provide one with entertainment, Lester emphasizes the fact that Jim's exists purely for use by other people. Similar to how Huck uses Pap for his own personal gain, Huck uses Jim as a way to dispel his loneliness, provide protection, and offer amusement. In ante-bellum society, slaves labor solely for the economic and material benefits of their white masters, whereas after the Civil War, the very concept of a nominal freedom for Southern blacks once again benefited society by assuaging the conscience of a society that had been made to feel guilty by the overt oppression of another human being. In both cases, society benefits from African-Americans with little regard to how it, in return, can provide them assistance. Jim and Huck as characters take on a greater significance in this light, with Jim coming to represent the plight of all African-Americans and Huck the opportunistic and vampire-like white society. Twain's depiction of Jim as a "plaything," underscores the fact that still in Twain's time, society viewed African-Americans primarily as a means to increase its own gains in a similar way to how the Huck uses his father and casts him aside. In a similar fashion, Bernard Bell addresses Southern society's tendency to overtly exploit African-Americans through the traditional minstrel show:

Since minstrelsy was a national symbolic ritual of debasement for blacks for petty profit and for the psychological distancing of whites from their personal responsibility in the tragic perversion of American principles, Twain's

taste in humor reveals his socialization as an American, no merely as a Southwesterner [sic], in the ethics of white supremacy. (12)

Through the concept of the minstrel show, a practice which persisted up through the turn of the 20th century, Bell identifies an additional way in which whites exploited African-Americans, in this case, as a mode for entertainment, and the corresponding economic profit. At its very nature, the minstrel show benefits whites by providing them a humorous release from their daily lives, yet as Bell suggests, this results in a psychological distancing from African-Americans. After the Civil War a large portion of white society does not concern itself as to how it can help out newly freed slaves, but instead continues to use perceived black culture for entertainment purposes, while casting aside the concerns of the individual people from which that culture stems. Because the minstrel show survives throughout post-Civil war America, Twain identifies and criticizes white society's persistence in using the mockery of African-American culture as a form of entertainment—a plaything of a different sort. Much in the same way that Huck uses his father for his own personal profit, Twain criticizes a Southern society that continues to exploit African-Americans.

<The example ends here. More helpful information follows, however. >

Importance Paragraph, explained:

Topic Sentence providing 1. a transition to my previous POA point (Huck is a vampire as seen in his relationship with Pap) and 2. a statement of what my importance is:

By establishing Huck's relationship with Pap as fundamentally vampire-like, Twain parallels Huck's opportunistic treatment of his father with that of a Southern society that still uses African-Americans for its own pleasure and satisfaction.

Quotation/Citation:

As Julius Lester comments:

Jim is a plaything, an excuse for "the adventure of it," to be used as it suits the fancies of the white folk, whether that fancy be a journey on a raft down the river or a torchlight parade. What

Jim clearly is not is a human being, and this is emphasized by the fact that Miss Watson's will frees Jim but makes no mention of his wife and children. (345)

Summary: In identifying Jim as essentially a toy, something intended to provide one with entertainment, Lester emphasizes the fact that Jim's exists purely for use by other people.

Validation: Similar to how Huck uses Pap for his own personal gain, Huck, uses Jim as a way to dispel his loneliness, provide protection, and offer amusement. **(Notice I also refer back to my previous POA point and observation paragraph when I refer to Pap as a way to help my reader feel like the ideas are connected.)**

Considerations: In ante-bellum society, slaves labored solely for the economic and material benefits of their white masters, whereas after the Civil War, the very concept of a nominal freedom for Southern Blacks once again benefits society by assuaging the conscience of a society that had been made to feel guilty by the overt oppression of another human being. In both cases, society benefits from African-Americans with little regard to how it, in return, can provide them assistance. The characters of Jim and Huck take on a greater significance in this light, with Jim coming to represent the plight of all African-Americans and Huck the opportunistic and vampire like white society.

Connection: The characters of Jim and Huck take on a greater significance in this light, with Jim coming to represent the plight of all African-Americans and Huck the opportunistic white society. Twain's depiction of Jim as a "plaything," underscores the fact that still in Twain's time, society viewed African-Americans primarily as a means to increase its own gains in a similar way to how Huck uses his father and casts him aside.

Transition and Introduction: In a similar fashion, Bernard Bell addresses Southern society's tendency to overtly exploit African-Americans through the traditional minstrel show:

Quotation/Citation:

Since minstrelsy was a national symbolic ritual of debasement for blacks for petty profit and for the psychological distancing of whites from their personal responsibility in the tragic perversion of American principles, Twain's taste in humor reveals his socialization as an American, no merely as a Southwesterner, in the ethics of white supremacy. (12)

Summary: Through the concept of the minstrel show, a practice which persisted up through the turn of the century, Bell identifies an additional way in which whites exploited African-Americans, in this case, as a mode for entertainment, and the corresponding economic profit. At its very nature, the minstrel show benefits whites by providing them a humorous release from their daily lives, yet as Bell suggests, this results in a psychological distancing from African-Americans.

Validation: After the Civil War, large portion of white society does not concern itself as to how it can help out newly freed slaves, but instead continues to use perceived black culture for entertainment purposes, while casting aside the concerns of the individual people from which that culture stems.

Consideration: Because the minstrel show survives throughout post-Civil war America, Twain identifies and criticizes white society's persistence in using the mockery of African-American culture as a form entertainment—a plaything of a different sort.

Connection: Much in the same way that Huck uses his father for his own personal profit, Twain criticizes a Southern society that continues to exploit African-Americans. **(Notice that this final connection also serves to refer back to my Observation paragraph; it mentions my previous POA point, and my overall importance. In this way, it also functions as a summary sentence for my paragraph.)**

General Guidelines:

- There is no general rule as to how many sentences you need to write for each step of the process. It will vary according to what you're trying to communicate. Generally the step is done when you have explained all that you need to in order to avoid any gaps in logic. Notice the difference in the length of each step between the two quotations.
- These paragraphs are still written in formal third person.
- You will want to harvest your thinking activity for your strongest ideas, especially under the “considerations” category. This is where **you** can put in **your own thoughts** on the issue, like my idea about the South benefiting by being able to say that African-Americans are technically free.
- Notice the effect that the transition and connection elements have on the overall success of the paragraph. In fact, skip to the end of this document to see what it would sound like if there were missing.
- If you find yourself floundering, write your paragraph by using the categories of your thinking activity. I learn a lot by breaking it down in this way for my examples.

An unpolished paragraph lacking transitions, connections, and some fancy words and sentences. Notice how much less effective this paragraph is even though it contains a lot of the same ideas. Hopefully this reinforces for you the importance of style.

Twain parallels Huck's opportunistic treatment of his father and a Southern society that still uses African-Americans for its own pleasure and satisfaction. As Julius Lester comments:

Jim is a plaything, an excuse for “the adventure of it,” to be used as it suits the fancies of the white folk, whether that fancy be a journey on a raft down the river or a torchlight parade. What Jim clearly is not is a human being, and this is emphasized by the fact that Miss Watson's will frees Jim but makes no mention of his wife and children. (345)

A toy is something intended to provide one with entertainment. Lester emphasizes the fact that Jim's exists purely for use by other people. Huck, uses Jim as a way to dispel his loneliness, provide protection, and offer amusement. Jim represents the plight African-Americans and Huck the ruling white class. Slaves labored solely for the economic and material benefits of their white masters, whereas the very concept of nominal freedom for Southern Blacks after the Civil War benefits society by making society feel less guilty about the oppression of another human being.

Twain's underscores the fact that still in Twain's time, society viewed African-Americans primarily as a means to increase its own gains. Bernard Bell addresses Southern society's tendency to overtly exploit African-Americans through the traditional minstrel show:

Since minstrelsy was a national symbolic ritual of debasement for blacks for petty profit and for the psychological distancing of whites from their personal responsibility in the tragic perversion of American principles, Twain's taste in humor reveals his socialization as an American, no merely as a Southwesterner, in the ethics of white supremacy. (12)

Minstrel shows persisted up through the turn of the century and Bell identifies an additional way in which whites exploited African-Americans, in this case, as a mode for entertainment, not to mention economic profit. The minstrel show benefits whites by providing them a humorous release from their daily lives. Bell suggests this results in a psychological distancing from African-Americans. After the Civil War a large portion of white society does not concern itself as to how it can help out newly freed slaves, but instead continues to use perceived black culture for entertainment purposes, while casting aside the concerns of the individual people from which that culture stems. Because the minstrel show survives throughout post-Civil war America, Twain has ample evidence that whites persist in using the mockery of African-American culture as a toy for entertainment. Huck uses his father for his own personal profit and Twain criticizes a Southern society that continues to exploit African-Americans.