

Adapted from Rioux

## **“Check Out the Big Brain on Brad!” – Analyzing Quotes in Depth**

Often times, the point of a paper in English class will be to prove a thesis. The best way to prove a thesis is to provide direct textual evidence and to analyze the ways in which that evidence supports your view. There are a number of ways to effectively analyze a direct quote in order to support a point. See the examples below for a model of how you might approach your own quotes in your paper:

### **Technique #1 – Meaning**

This technique is the most obvious (though necessary) way to analyze. In this technique, you explain the meaning of the quote as it relates to the topic. You explain what the quote says and how the meaning of the quote proves your point (this technique works best when the meaning of a passage is particularly difficult to work out).

### **Technique #2 – Language**

For this technique, you analyze the specific language being used in the quote and discuss what it reveals about the topic. If the quote is dialogue or narration from a first person narrator, you can also use the specific word choice to analyze the character speaking/thinking the quote.

For example, if a character says, “I am caught in your tornado of love!” what does the use of the word “tornado” imply? Why does he use the verb “caught”? What does it imply?

### **Technique #3 – Grammar**

For this technique, you analyze the author’s use of punctuation, grammatical conventions, and word choice in a quote.

For example, if a character says, “No. I’m fine. I am. This is good. This is the right choice. I understand that. I do,” what does the author’s use of punctuation reveal about the character’s true feelings?

### **Technique #4 – Omission**

For this technique, you look at what the quote is purposely leaving out and what that omission reveals about the topic of your paragraph or paper.

For example, if a character is talking about his girlfriend and he mentions her hair, her eyes, her lips, her wealth, and her car, what could you conclude? What omission is the most revealing? (What word is missing?)

### **Technique #5 – Expectation versus Reality**

In this technique, you present the reader with the most common expectation and then show how the quote illustrates a departure from this expectation. You then need to explain what this departure from the expectation reveals.

For example, If at the birth of a child the husband in the delivery room does not smile or cry. What is the expectation for his behavior in this moment? What does his actual behavior potentially reveal?

## Practice

For this assignment, we will practice setting up and analyzing direct quotes in order to support theses. We will use what you remember from Ayn Rand's *Anthem* as the basis for our practice.

**Essay Topic (Thesis):** Individual freedom is essential to building a productive society.

**Direct Quote / Textual Evidence:** "Here, on this mountain, I and my sons and my chosen friends shall build our new land and our fort. And it will become as the heart of the hearth, lost and hidden at first, but beating, beating louder each day. And word of it will reach every corner of the earth. And the roads of the world will become as veins which will carry the best of the world's blood to my threshold. And all my brothers, and the Councils of my brothers, will hear of it, but they will be impotent against me." (Rand 104).

**Quote set up:** List 3-5 detail sentences that represent what you would have to explain in order to effectively set up this quote. In other words, provide context about where the speaker is, what is happening to them, and/or to whom they are speaking:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

**Analysis:** Select and circle one of the five techniques that you think is most appropriate to analyze this quote, then write 3-5 sentences that use key words from the thesis in order to connect this paragraph back to your central idea:

Meaning   Language   Grammar   Omission   Expectation vs. Reality	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	