



Including Quotes vs. Close Reading

The passages you cite might be relevant to the claims you are making; however, to perform a close reading, you can't rely on passages to "show" or "demonstrate" your point for you. This is why whenever you use the phrase, "this quote shows," you've already made a mistake!

Instead of relying on a passage to automatically function as your evidence, rely on **YOUR analysis or interpretation** of the specific details and elements of the passage to prove your point. Your ideas about their words will support your argument, not their words alone.

Here are some examples of effective and ineffective ways to use direct quotes:

Not effective: The quote "platoons of running shoes" shows the bachelor runs a lot.

Effective: The description of the bachelor's "platoons of running shoes [that] camp by the door" indicates his relatively cold and methodical approach to exercise; the military language suggests that, for the bachelor, running is a task, not a joy.

Not effective: The bachelor's "fridge comes with 'lite' beer/And nonfat milk," which shows that he tries to be healthy.

Effective: The "lite beer" and "non-fat" milk in the bachelor's refrigerator are incomplete products and symbolize the bachelor's lack of wholeness. He is healthy and physically fit but emotionally numb.

Not effective: The speaker says, "I've looked but there's no sugar here," showing that he can't find any sweetness in the bachelor's house.

Effective: The speaker's claim, "I've looked but there's no sugar here" reveals two things: first, that the bachelor does have people in his life, which is significant because it implies that the bachelor's loneliness may be his own fault. Secondly, the lack of sugar in his household suggests also that the bachelor intentionally deprives himself of the sweetness of life, whether that comes from treats or from relationships with others.