

Leading Into Quotations: A Simple Guide

The Lead-in's First Job: To help the reader understand what's happening when the quotation takes place

- Who's speaking? To whom?
- What just happened? What is about to happen?
- Ms. Leclaire's hint: Figure that your readers have read the texts you're writing about, but it's been a little while; give them enough information to jog their memories. One or two sentences usually does the trick.

The Lead-in's Second Job: To smoothly incorporate the quotation into the writer's own sentence

- Feel free to cut parts out of the quotation (from the beginning, middle, or end) to make it work with your sentence.
- Read the whole darn thing aloud to make sure it sounds like a seamless, grammatically correct sentence.
- Show off what a strong creative writer you are! Pick powerful verbs.

Example: Macbeth eventually defies the good side of himself and chooses to take the natural man's path of greed and power, but Lady Macbeth fears that he will not have the courage to do what is necessary to become king. She despairs, "Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be/What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;/It is too full o' the milk of human kindness"(1.5. 16-19).

Example: In the poem the speaker shows greed over taking conscience when he faces "A man who would stop at nothing" (Gonzalez).

Try Fixing These:

Original: Lady Macbeth wants “Come, thick night, / And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, / That my keen knife see not the / wound it makes, / Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark / To cry “Hold, hold!” (1.5.40-44)

Fixed: Lady Macbeth wants night to hide the evil deeds so that not even “heaven peep through the blanket of the dark” (1.5.43).

Original: Lady Macbeth’s attendant comments on the candle “Why, it stood by her. She has light by her continually / ‘Tis her command” (5.1.14-15).

Fixed:

Original: The speaker strives to find a sense of direction. “Stand aside, make way, for I have to get to such and such a place” (Gonzalez).

Fixed:

Original: The speaker grows weaker throughout the poem, saying, “my body walks by itself, getting lost” (Gonzalez).

Fixed: