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# Choosing, Introducing, and Explicating Quotations for Literary Essays

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Quotations taken from the text are an essential part of any literary argument essay. Quotations **help support the claim** you are making in your thesis statement, and, along with your use of textual evidence stated in your own words, they demonstrate why you think the way you do about the text.

## Choosing a quotation:

- In a short essay, generally fewer than 10 pages, or an open response, quotations taken from the text should be reasonably short, meaning fewer than three typed lines.
- When you are looking for quotations, make sure to choose ones that support your argument clearly and succinctly.
- Don't use a quotation to summarize the plot or make your argument. This is important. Quotations taken from the text help support your argument.
- Use quotations that demonstrate something not easily summarized or paraphrased in your own words.

## Introducing and Explicating a quotation:

- Don't drop the quotation into your essay without any introduction. Incorporate it into the text of your essay by introducing its context to your reader. Begin a quotation with an introductory phrase followed by a comma, an independent clause followed by a colon, or no punctuation and blended into the sentence.
- The process of explaining a quotation is called explication. To **explicate** means to explain, elucidate, clarify, expound, or illuminate. **Don't ever assume** that your reader is making the same connections that you are making in your head.
- Following the quotation, explain how it helps to support and prove your argument. Try to avoid "this quotation shows" when you do this.
- Remember, quotations help to enrich and expand upon your claim, but you need to provide your reader with the insights you are making.