

recombine, the elements of that analysis to form an original idea of your own (see pp. 365–68). Your goal is to think critically about what other writers have said and to reach your own conclusions.

When writing about reading, refer to the writer's ideas directly and draw on evidence to support your conclusions. Use summary, paraphrase, and quotation (see pp. 365–67) to give readers a sense of the work, a clear picture of the elements that you are responding to, and a measured understanding of how those elements contribute to your thesis.

Using Research to Support a Thesis

Often, when you draft an essay, you'll discover that you need more information to clarify part of your subject or to develop a few of your points more fully. Other times, you'll want to conduct more extensive research—for instance, when you need several examples to develop your draft, when you are troubled by conflicting assertions in essays you're comparing, or when you want expert opinion to support your argument. Even a little outside material can contribute compelling and informative support for an essay. This section explains the basics of researching sources and using what you find responsibly and correctly.

Finding Sources

You have two basic options for locating sources: the library and the Internet. Although both can be good sources of information, in general you should prefer printed sources or information located through your library's electronic research portals (such as subject directories and databases) over material you might pull up with a popular Web search engine such as *Google*.

When you're looking for sources, never be shy about asking librarians for help, but make a point of familiarizing yourself with the most useful basic research tools.

- *Subject directories* organize material on the Web into categories. Although the open Internet is riskier than the library for research, a good directory can be a helpful starting point. The best are those compiled by librarians, particularly the Librarians' Internet Index (<http://www.lii.org>) and directories created for individual colleges (check your library's home page).
- *Library catalogs* offer a comprehensive listing of printed materials (books, magazines, newspapers, reference works, and the like)

APPENDIX

WORKING WITH SOURCES

Writing is a means of communicating, a conversation between writers and readers—and between writers and other writers. Finding out what others have said about a subject, or looking for information to support and develop your thesis, is a natural part of the composing process.

A **source** is any work that you draw on for ideas or evidence in the course of writing your essay. Whether you are analyzing or responding to an essay in this book or using research to support your interpretation of a subject, the guidelines in this appendix will help you to use the work of others effectively in your own writing.

Writing about Readings

Many of the assignments that follow the readings in this book ask you to respond directly to an essay or to write about it in relation to one or more other essays—to analyze two writers' approaches, to compare several writers' ideas about a subject, or to use the ideas in one reading to investigate the meanings of another. The same will be true of much writing you do throughout college, whether you are examining literary works, psychological theories, business case studies, historical documents, or lesson plans.

In some academic writing, you'll be able to use an idea in a selection as a springboard for an essay about your own opinions or experiences. However, when academic writing requires you to write *about* one or more readings, you will analyze the material (see Chapter 1) and synthesize, or

housed in a library. Most are computerized, which means you can plug in a search term—subject keyword, author, or title, for instance—and pull up a list of what the library has. Many colleges also let you search the holdings of related libraries and arrange for interlibrary loan.

- *Periodical indexes* provide listings of the articles in thousands of magazines, scholarly journals, and newspapers. Electronic subscription services, such as EBSCO and ProQuest often provide full-text copies of some of the articles located in a search; other times, you will need to use the information listed in the citation to track down the relevant issue on the library shelves.

Evaluating Sources

When you read a written work for an assignment, you read it critically, digging beneath the surface of the words to tease out the author's intentions and analyze the author's use of evidence (see Chapter 1). The same is true when you use sources to support your ideas. Drawing on reliable information and balancing biased opinions strengthen your essay.

You need not read everything you find as closely as you would a reading assignment. Instead, scan potential sources to see how well each one satisfies the following criteria:

- *Is the source relevant?* Focus on sources that are directly related to your subject.
- *How current is the information?* In most cases, the more recently your source was published or updated, the better.
- *What is the author's purpose?* Consider, for instance, whether a source is meant to provide information, argue a point, or sell a product. When you're looking at a Web site, the URL can give you sense of the purpose of the source: sites ending in *.com* (commercial) are generally created to sell, market, or entertain; sites ending in *.gov* (government), *.net* (network), and *.org* (nonprofit organization) more often exist to provide information.
- *Is the author reliable?* Determine not only who wrote the material but also the writer's qualifications for writing on the subject, and look for any potential biases. Notice how the author uses evidence: reliable writers provide detailed support for their ideas, distinguish between facts and opinions, acknowledge opposing viewpoints, and cite their sources.

Once you've determined that a source is worth using, the checklist for critical reading on page 8 can help you to examine it more closely.

Synthesizing Source Material

When you bring information and ideas from outside sources into your writing, your goal is to develop and support your own thesis. It can be tempting to string together facts and quotations from your sources and to think that they speak for themselves—or for you—but then your own ideas won't predominate. Aim instead for **synthesis**, weaving the elements into a new whole: gather related information and ideas from your sources and summarize, paraphrase, and quote them to support an idea of your own making. Always strive to maintain your own voice when you're writing.

Summarizing

A **summary** is a condensed statement, *in your own words*, of the main meaning of a work. Summaries omit supporting details and examples to focus on the original author's thesis. You can find short summaries of essays throughout this book in the sections "A Note on Thematic Connections," which appear in Chapters 5–14. For example:

Langston Hughes pinpoints the moment during a church revival when he lost his faith (78–80).

Perri Klass's essay grapples with why doctors use peculiar and often cruel jargon and how it affects them (133–36).

Notice that each summary names the author of the work being summarized and provides page numbers; it also refrains from using any of the original authors' language.

Summarizing is one of the most effective ways to bring the ideas of others into your writing without losing your voice or bogging down your essay with unnecessary details. Depending on the length of the original work and your reasons for using it, your summary might be a single sentence or paragraph; keep it as short as possible.

Paraphrasing

A **paraphrase** is a restatement, again *in your own words*, of a short passage from another writer's work. While summarizing makes it possible

to explain someone else's main idea without repeating specifics, paraphrasing lets you incorporate important details that support your own main idea.

A paraphrase is about the same length as the original, but it does not use any of the other writer's unique words, phrases, or sentence structures. Simply replacing a few words with synonyms won't suffice; in fact, that shortcut counts as plagiarism (see pp. 368–69). If you can't not avoid using some of the writer's language, put it in quotation marks. For example:

ORIGINAL PASSAGE "Poverty is defined, in my system, by people not being able to cover the basic necessities in their lives. Indispensable medical care, nutrition, a place to live: all these essentials, for poor people, are often and classically beyond reach. If a poor person needs \$10 a day to make ends meet, often he or she only makes eight and a half."

—Walter Mosley, "Show Me the Money," p. 6.

PARAPHRASE As Walter Mosley sees it, poverty is a matter of inadequate resources. The poor have difficulty obtaining adequate health care, food, and shelter—things most of us take for granted—not because they have no income at all, but because the money they earn is not enough to cover these basic expenses (6).

ORIGINAL PASSAGE "Wealth, in my definition, is when money is no longer an issue or a question. Wealthy people don't know how much money they have or how much they make. Their worth is gauged in property, natural resources, and power, in doors they can go through and the way the law works."

—Walter Mosley, "Show Me The Money," p. 6.

PARAPHRASE Wealth, in contrast, is defined by freedom. The rich don't have to worry about finances; indeed, their "property, natural resources, and power" confer social and legal privileges far more significant than freely available cash (Mosley 6).

Notice here, too, that a paraphrase identifies the original source and provides a page number. Even if the words are your own, the ideas are someone else's, and so they must be credited.

Quoting

Sometimes a writer's or speaker's exact words will be so well phrased or so important to your own meaning that you will want to quote them. When you are responding to or analyzing passages in a written work, such as an essay or a novel, direct quotations will be essential evidence as you develop your points. Even when you are borrowing ideas from other

writers, however, quoting can be useful if the author's original wording makes a strong impression that you want to share with your readers.

Be sparing in your use of quotations. Limit yourself to those lines to which you're responding directly and perhaps a handful of choice passages that would lose their punch or meaning if you paraphrased them.

When you do use a quotation, be careful to copy the original words and punctuation exactly, and to identify clearly the boundaries and source of the quotation:

- Put *quotation marks* around all quoted material shorter than four typed lines.
- Use *block quotations* for quoted passages longer than four typed lines. Start the quotation on a new line and indent the whole passage ten spaces or one inch. Don't use quotation marks; the indentation shows that the material is quoted.
- *Cite the source of the quotation*, giving a page number as well as the author's name (see pp. 370–72). For short quotations, place a parenthetical citation after the final quotation mark and before the period. For block quotations, place a parenthetical citation after the final period.

You can make changes in quotations so that they fit the flow of your own sentences—say, by deleting a word or sentence that is not relevant to your purpose or by inserting a word or punctuation mark to clarify meaning. However, such changes must be obvious:

- Use an *ellipsis mark*, or three spaced periods (. . .), to show a deletion. Stewart and Elizabeth Ewen have suggested that "for hardworking, ill-housed immigrants, . . . clothing offered one of the few avenues by which people could assume a sense of belonging" (156).
- Use *brackets* ([]) around any change or addition you make.

Most fashion historians echo Thorstein Veblen's assertion that "members of each [social] stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum" (84).

For examples of the use and formatting of quotations, see the sample documented essay by Tae Andrews (p. 381).

Integrating

When you incorporate material from outside sources, make a point to introduce every summary, paraphrase, or quotation and to specify why

it's relevant to your thesis. At the same time, make it clear where your thoughts end and someone else's thoughts begin. Three techniques are especially helpful in giving your readers the necessary guidance.

- *Use signal phrases to introduce summaries, paraphrases, and quotations.* A signal phrase names the author of the borrowed material and thus provides a transition between your idea and someone else's. If the information is relevant, you might also explain why the author is an authoritative source or name the article or book you're referring to. Here are some examples of signal phrases:

As financial planner Zora Klyberg points out in the pamphlet *Start Saving for Retirement NOW* . . .

US Census Bureau data reveal . . .

Not everyone agrees. Wilbert Rideau, for example, believes that . . .

Be careful to craft each signal phrase to reflect your reasons for including a source. Using the same phrase over and over (such as "According to _____") will frustrate your readers.

- *Generally, mark the end of borrowed material with a parenthetical citation identifying at least the page number of your source.* (See pp. 370–72.) In most cases, the citation is required—an exception would be a source lacking page or other reference numbers—and it makes clear that you've finished with the source and are returning to your own argument.

- *Follow up with a brief explanation of how the material supports your point.* You might, for example, comment on the meaning of the borrowed material, dispute it, or summarize it in the context of a new idea. Such follow-ups are especially necessary after block quotations.

For examples of effective integration of source materials, see Tae Andrews's sample essay (p. 381).

Avoiding Plagiarism

Claiming credit for writing that you didn't compose yourself is plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty that can carry serious consequences. Buying an essay online and submitting it as your own, copying a friend's essay and submitting it as your own, or copying just a sentence from a source and including it as your own—these are most obvious forms of plagiarism. But plagiarism is often unintentional, caused not by deliberate cheating but by misunderstanding or sloppiness. Be aware of the

rules and responsibilities that come with using the work of others in your writing.

- *Take careful notes.* Thorough and accurate records are essential. If you copy down the exact words of a source, enclose them in quotation marks. If you paraphrase or summarize, make a note that the language is your own, and double-check that you haven't picked up any of the original phrasing. Always record full source information for any material you find, using the models on pages 372–80.
- *Use electronic sources with care.* Any language or idea you find, regardless of where you find it, must be credited to its source. Resist the urge to cut and paste snippets from online sources directly into your working draft: later on you won't be able to distinguish the borrowed text from your own words. Print electronic documents for your records, or save them as clearly labeled individual files.
- *Know the definition of common knowledge.* *Common knowledge* is information that is so widely known or broadly accepted that it can't be traced to a particular writer. Facts that you can find in multiple sources—the date of a historic event, the population of a major city—do not need to be credited as long as you state them in your own words. In contrast, original material that can be traced to a particular person—the lyrics to a song, an article on the Web—must be cited even if it has been distributed widely. Note that even if a piece of information is common knowledge, the wording of that information is not: put it in your own words.
- *Never include someone else's ideas in your writing without identifying the borrowed material and acknowledging its source.* If you use another writer's exact words, enclose them in quotation marks and identify the source. If you summarize or paraphrase, clearly distinguish your ideas from the source author's with a signal phrase and a source citation. Then, at the end of your paper, list all your sources in a works cited list. (See the next section, "Documenting Sources in MLA style.")

When in doubt, err on the side of caution. It's better to have too much documentation in your essay than not enough.

Documenting Sources in MLA Style

In English classes, and in some other humanities as well, you will be expected to document your sources with the system outlined by the Modern Language Association in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research*