



CHAPTER 15

the art of writing | dialogue with the reader

Using Quote / Paraphrase / Summary to Present Evidence

When you read, you have a **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT**. When you write, you have a **DIALOGUE WITH THE READER**, *your* reader, the person who reads what you write. We like to think that when you write a text, a book, an essay, a letter, anything at all, it lies silent until someone picks it up to read or reread it. Then it comes alive again.

When you write an essay, when you speak to your reader, when you speak *with* your reader, you want to support your **THESIS** with **EVIDENCE**. You want to bring as much information to your reader as you can because you are in **DIALOGUE** with him or her. By using **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY**, as John Seabrook does in “Renaissance Pears,” you can prove your **THESIS**, and you can bring information to your reader. You will make your essay more dynamic and richer in tone.

QUOTE, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY** all present concrete evidence that proves your thesis. You don’t use just any **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, or **SUMMARY** to use in your essay. You choose **QUOTES**, **PARAPHRASES**, and **SUMMARIES** that prove your **THESIS**.

In Chapter 14, page 181, we saw how John Seabrook used **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY** to prove his thesis. Now, let’s look at how you might use **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY**. Imagine you write an essay in which you use **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY**, all taken from John Seabrook’s “Renaissance Pears.” Let’s imagine that the essay you write has this **THESIS**:

After World War II, life in Europe and America changed from rural to urban, from small and personal communities in which people cared for each other to large, impersonal communities where the individual could get lost. Our culture even changed from an awareness of taking care of the environment that was close around us to one that exploits our environment for all the profit we can get.

To develop your essay and to prove your thesis, you could use **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY** in the following ways (we've put **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY** in bold type):

quote

We use a **DIRECT QUOTE** from a text when we take the *exact language* from that text and use it in our own writing. You always put the **DIRECT QUOTE** in quotation marks.

The journalist, John Seabrook, found an example of Old World Italy, and of how people took care of each other, when he met Sergia, an 84-year old Italian woman who wore a ragged shift, filthy slippers, and carried a long walking stick. Hearing Seabrook's American accent, Sergia **“recalled the Americans who had escaped from a nearby Fascist prison and turned up one night in 1943; she had given them shelter and something to eat”** (104).¹

You have chosen this **direct quote** from “Renaissance Pears” because it proves your thesis. By quoting this woman, you show us how, in the old rural farms and villages, people took care of strangers.

We put quotation marks around a **direct quote** to indicate we have accurately reported what the author wrote.

A **direct quote** gives us the *exact language* of a text, so we know you have reported accurately to us what the text said. A **direct quote** also gives us a flavor of the original language, so we know what it sounds like.

paraphrase

When you want to convey information from a text but don't want to use a **direct quote**, you can use **PARAPHRASE**. When you **PARAPHRASE**, you convey an idea from a text, but you write it in your own language. So, when do you paraphrase? Perhaps you don't remember the **direct quote** or don't have the original text in front of you. Perhaps you have already used several **direct quotes** in your essay, and you want to add some variety of style. Perhaps you want to restate, in your own words, what someone else has written or said. Now, we will paraphrase the quote from “Renaissance Pears.”

The journalist, John Seabrook, described an old Italian woman he met, Sergia, with her ragged shift, her dirty slippers, and her long walking stick. She told Seabrook about how she took in and cared for American soldiers who, during World War II, had escaped from a nearby Fascist prison (104).

¹When you use *any* information from another source, **quote**, **paraphrase**, **summary**, or just a statement of fact, you must give credit to that source through **citation**. The *MLA Handbook*, or some other style reference book, will show you how to do **citations**.

We have given the same information as Seabrook, but we have used our own words. We have **PARAPHRASED** Seabrook's article in order to convey this information but to vary the style of quoting and to speak more directly to the reader in our own language.

In fact, we use **PARAPHRASE** all the time. When we tell someone about an event that happened in a book we read, we generally **paraphrase** that. When we talk about some scene in a film we saw, we **PARAPHRASE** that scene. Even if we just tell someone about an argument an article in the newspaper made, we **PARAPHRASE** that argument.

summary

A **SUMMARY** should be much shorter than the original text. A **SUMMARY** gives just the *main points* of the original text.

In your essay on the change of culture in Europe and America after World War II, you could write about many aspects of modern European and American life, about urban crowding, about industrialization, about traffic congestion, about religion, politics, etc. You might even write about the Dalla Ragione's orchard as one among many interesting things in modern Europe that relates to "Old World" Italy. You don't need all the rich details from "Renaissance Pears" for your essay, you just want the main ideas. Your **summary** gives you that.

Isabella Dalla Ragione and her father, Livio, search for species of trees in danger of extinction and save those species by planting a cutting in their orchard on a hilltop in the Italian province of Umbria.

Isabella learns about the existence of ancient trees from Renaissance paintings, from obscure books, and from old records kept by feudal landowners. Then she will ask around if anyone has seen a particular obscure fruit tree, such as the Fiorentina pear tree. People will tell her they have seen a tree on an old farm, in an old nunnery, or elsewhere. Isabella will travel to find the tree, to save it.

Modern agriculture in the industrialized world has reduced the variety of fruits available to us in our supermarkets. The Dalla Ragiones hope to save the tastes and flavors of the Old World in their orchard of ancient fruit trees.

When might you want to use a **SUMMARY**?

- **To provide a context for your reader.** In writing an analytical essay, you want to make sure your reader understands what you're analyzing. When you give a **SUMMARY** of that text, your reader will know what you're talking about when he or she reads your analysis. In this case, your **SUMMARY** gives a context for your reader to understand your essay.

- **To understand a text.** A **SUMMARY** helps you understand a text. If you want to know a text well, do a **SUMMARY**. It will engage you with the text. When you are done, you will know the text thoroughly, and you will understand it better.
- **To understand the thesis.** You must know the main point of a text to **SUMMARIZE** it. You must ask yourself, “Why did the author write this text?” When you answer that, you will know the **THESIS** of the text.
- **For a presentation.** A Professor may ask you to give a **SUMMARY** of something you have read. He/she may also ask you to give a **SUMMARY** of a paper you have written for the class.
- **In business.** Your boss may ask you to give her or him a **SUMMARY** of a business report. We call this an **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**. If you have written a book you want to submit for publication, you might write a **SUMMARY** for the publisher. There are many business uses for a **SUMMARY**.
- **In your personal life.** In everyday life, you may **SUMMARIZE** for your friends a movie you saw, a vacation trip, an article you read, your life at college. In fact, almost every day we use **SUMMARY**.

Having learned about **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, and **SUMMARY**, you can now use all three of them effectively in your writing. You will also become aware of how you use them in your daily life. Suppose you call your brother, who is at another college, to tell him about this interesting article you just read, “Renaissance Pears.” You read to your brother from the article: “**Pear trees can live for more than two hundred and fifty years—among fruit trees, only olives live longer.**” You ask him if the olive tree in your backyard at home might be that old. You have just used a **QUOTE** in your daily conversation with your brother.

Chapter Review: Using Quote/Paraphrase/Summary As Evidence

Use **quote**, **paraphrase**, and **summary** to present **EVIDENCE** that proves your **THESIS**.

A **direct quote** gives us the *exact language* of a text.

Put a **direct quote** in quotation marks.

A **paraphrase** gives us an idea from the text in your own language.

A **summary** gives just the main ideas from the text. Use a summary:

- to provide a context for your reader;
- to help you to understand a text yourself;
- to find and understand the thesis;
- for a presentation;
- in business;
- in your personal life.

