

**Use present tense when referring to a passage in a literary text:**

When Gawain departs from Arthur's court, those he leaves behind criticize Arthur for allowing this to happen.

The narrator of *Beowulf* seems at times to be judging and at other times to be glorifying the culture of the pre-Christian Germanic tribes whose stories he tells.

**Don't use the literary work's title as your own title.** Try "The Women of *Beowulf*: No 'Desperate Housewives'" rather than *Beowulf*, which has already been taken.

**Introduce the text by title and author.** Early in your first paragraph you should refer by name to the literary text(s) your essay will be about. Name the writer, if a name is known, using both first and last names. After this, refer to the writer by his or her last name only: not "Bob" or "Mr. Jones," but "Jones."

**Start each paragraph with an analytical "claim."** Consider what the *purpose* of each of your paragraphs is and then be sure that first sentence communicates not just the subject of the paragraph, but what you intend to say *about* it.

**Avoid plot summary.** Bring into your paper references to details of the plot where needed as support for your analysis, but do not offer plot summary for its own sake. Be sure you know exactly why you're presenting such material, when you do; if the purpose isn't clear to you, it won't be to your reader, either.

**When quoting directly** from a literary work,

- Be sure you introduce the material you are quoting; don't expect quotations to stand alone, to speak for themselves.
- Carefully blend the quoted material into your own writing, so that the grammar and punctuation flow smoothly and logically.
- Quote ONLY the relevant portion(s) of a passage; include only as much as is necessary to make your point.
- Quote exactly, being incredibly careful not to leave out or change a word, or to misspell a word, or to insert or delete punctuation from the original.
- Use ellipses to indicate omitted material from within the quoted passage (but not at the beginning or end of a quote), and use brackets (not parentheses) to indicate material you are inserting or modifying: "Upon returning to Geatland, [Beowulf] honored Hygelac."
- When you quote lines of verse within your paper (not in a block quote; use that only for quotes that extend beyond three lines of your paper), put a slash (with a space on either side of it) between the lines of verse, and capitalize to match the source: "Now Beowulf bode in the burg of the Scyldings, / leader beloved, and long he ruled" (1-2)
- Indent a block quote ten spaces from the left, none from the right. This material should be double-spaced. It does not need quotation marks around it (since it's indented; that indicates that it's a quote), and the period goes before, rather than after, the parentheses.
- Place parenthetical documentation after and outside of the quotation marks, and use a comma or period or semi-colon (etc.) after the parentheses, as suits your sentence.

If the quoted text is a poem, insert line numbers, not page numbers, in the parentheses.

If the text is anonymous, you will not use an author's name but rather the title of the text: (*Beowulf* 1403-07).