How to Integrate Quotes in Literary Analysis

A Simple Guide
• Your essay is *your* argument. Too many quotations can overpower your voice.

• Use quotations sparingly.
POWER

• Quote only words, sentences, or passages that are powerful.
Introduce a Quotation

• Never drop a quotation in your paper. You must use your own words to introduce a quotation.
Be Strong

• In order to make your own writing flow as smoothly as possible, it is usually best to use only an effective part of the quotation as part of your own sentences.
Ellipses

• When omitting words from within a single sentence, use only three ellipsis dots ( . . . ). Three point ellipses have single typed spaces before and after each of the three dots:

• Faulty: “water…had”
• Correct: “water . . . had.”
Brackets

• Use brackets to specify ambiguous pronouns within a quotation.

• Example: “As revealed to me [Oedipus] by the Delphi oracle” (15).
You Do the Work

• Do not rely on quotations to do the work for you.

• You must always follow a quotation or paraphrase with commentary.

Never end a paragraph with a quotation.
Make Changes

• Quotations should fit into your argument. If punctuation, pronouns, or verb tenses do not flow with your own words, paraphrase or make minor changes to the quotation, surrounding them with brackets.
Integrating Quotes: Pattern # 1

• 1. An introducing clause plus the quotation:

Gatsby is not to be regarded as a personal failure because "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" (176), according to Nick.

This is a complex sentence.

*Because* is a subordinate conjunction.
Pattern # 2

• 2. An assertion of your own and a colon plus the quotation:
  • Fitzgerald gives Nick a muted tribute to the hero: "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" (176).

This works best if your quotation is a complete clause
Pattern # 3

3. An assertion of your own with quoted material worked in:
   - For Nick, who remarks that Gatsby "turned out all right" (176), the hero deserves respect but perhaps does not inspire great admiration.

This works best when you pull only power words from the quotation.
• Note: The words in bold effectively introduce the quote. No quote ever stands alone. Follow your quotes with commentary. Do not begin commentary with words such as “this quote shows” or “this quote reveals.”

• Note how the following commentary flows from the quotation and has substance.
Model Commentary

• Taken from *A Writer’s Model: “A Locust in the Garden”*

• The story alludes again and again to the sheltering comfort of the garden. The man tries to maintain an illusion that nothing serious has happened to him, that in time he will “feel as if he had always been like that” (397). The garden is his refuge against reality.