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How to Use Text Evidence

When you write about something you have read, you need to use **text evidence**—that is, details from the text—to support the points you are making. You can use text evidence in the form of a direct quotation (the author’s exact words) or a paraphrase (a restatement of what the author wrote). You also need to explain WHY that text evidence is relevant.

Here are some tips for using text evidence:

1. Quote or paraphrase.

When using a **direct quote**, copy down the exact words from a sentence. Surround a direct quotation with quotation marks.

To **paraphrase** is to put something written or spoken by someone else into your own words. You don’t change the meaning of what the other person wrote or said, just the wording. A paraphrase is not surrounded by quotation marks.

2. Make it clear where your evidence comes from.

Identify who wrote or said what you are quoting or paraphrasing. This is called “**citing your source**.” Include a page number.

Words to help you:

*according to (the author),
(the author) claims,
suggests, states, writes,
reports, describes, implies,
explains, argues, declares,
observes, notes, reveals,
remarks*

3. Explain why your text evidence is relevant.

Include a sentence that makes it clear how the text evidence supports your idea. Reread the information you quoted or paraphrased and ask yourself, “So what?”

Words to help you:

*(the author) says this
because, this proves that,
this exemplifies how, this
confirms, demonstrates,
describes, explains,
illustrates, implies,
suggests*

Now let's look at two sample paragraphs. The first uses text evidence correctly.
The second uses text evidence incorrectly.

SAMPLE 1

Riding the world's tallest and fastest roller coaster, Kingda Ka, is a unique experience. According to author Mario Martinez in his book Roller Coasters of the World, Kingda Ka accelerates to 128 miles per hour in less than three seconds, going straight up at a 90-degree angle (18). "I have ridden hundreds of coasters," he writes. "But none of them were as terrifying as this one" (20). This suggests that Kingda Ka stands out among roller coasters as particularly intense.

This paragraph looks great! There are quotation marks around the direct quote, the writer tells us where the paraphrase and the quote came from, and the writer explains how her text evidence supports her statement that riding Kingda Ka is a unique experience. Hooray!

SAMPLE 2

Riding the world's tallest and fastest roller coaster, Kingda Ka, is a unique experience. According to Mario Martinez, Kingda Ka accelerates to 128 miles per hour in less than three seconds, going straight up at a 90-degree angle. "I have ridden hundreds of coasters. But none of them were as terrifying as this one."

In this paragraph, neither the quote nor the paraphrase is cited correctly. Who is Mario Martinez? Which page in what book or article did the paraphrase and quote come from? The writer also fails to explain how her text evidence supports her statement that riding Kingda Ka is unique. She just plopped her text evidence into her paragraph.

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How to Answer a Constructed Response Question

Step 1: State your claim.

Your claim is your answer to the question. Your claim should . . .

- **echo the question. In other words, it should turn the question into a statement.**

Example A: Imagine you are answering the question, “According to the article, what is the best way to eat chocolate?” Your answer should start like this: “According to the article, the best way to eat chocolate is . . .”

Example B: Imagine you are answering the question, “Does the author think it’s ever okay to lie?” If your answer is yes, your answer could start like this: “The author thinks that sometimes it’s okay to lie . . .”

- **include reasoning or explanation. So if you are answering a yes-or-no question, you need to do more than say yes or no—you also need to provide some explanation or reason for your answer. If you are answering an open-ended question, you need to provide a brief summary or explanation of your ideas. Your reasoning or explanation should be one to three sentences.**

Example A: According to the article, the best way to eat chocolate is take your time and enjoy the chocolate with all five of your senses.

Example B: “The author thinks that sometimes it’s okay to lie, if you are lying to make someone feel good and no harm will come from your lie.”

Step 2: Provide text evidence with commentary.

Text evidence is details from the text that support your claim—in other words, details from the text that show why your claim is true.

Commentary is where you explain WHY the text evidence supports your claim. Your commentary should include key words from your claim. Text evidence . . .

- **can be in the form of a direct quotation or paraphrase.**
- **should be cited. In other words, you need to make it clear to the reader where the quote or paraphrase came from. Give the page number and, if it’s not obvious, the author’s name and/or the name of the article.**

Here are two examples of text evidence with commentary:

Example A (using a direct quote): “Before you bite the chocolate, take a moment to look at it,” the author writes on page 5. “Admire its glossy shine. Then lift it to your nose and take a deep inhale. What do you notice?” (p. 5) Here, the author is telling readers to take their time before biting into the chocolate, and to use their senses of sight and smell to enjoy the chocolate.

For more on using text evidence, see Scope’s “How to Use Text Evidence” reference sheet.

Example B (using a paraphrase): According to the author, it's okay to tell your friend you're sure no one at the party noticed the spinach stuck between her teeth, because there is nothing to be done about it now and maybe you can relieve some of your friend's embarrassment (p. 14). Here, the author is saying that it's OK to tell a small lie that makes someone feel better and doesn't do any harm.

Step 3: Write a conclusion.

A conclusion is 1-3 closing sentences that leave your reader with an insightful thought. A conclusion could . . .

- **state whether you agree or disagree with the author's point of view, and why.**
- **state whether you think the author's reasoning is sound or unsound, and why.**
- **tell how the topic you've been writing about connects to your life.**

Here are two examples of text evidence with commentary:

Example A: Perhaps eating chocolate in the slow, thoughtful way the author suggests could lead to a deeper enjoyment of it—but eating chocolate this way would also require an awful lot of patience and self-control!

Example B: Is the author right? I think so. Being completely honest about everything at all times is very likely to lead to some hurt feelings, and why hurt someone's feelings if it's not necessary?

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Constructing a Response

Directions: Read "Can the Desert Tortoise Be Saved?" and complete the activity on page 29. Then follow the steps below to write a response to the question on page 29.

→ See *Scope's* "How to Answer a Constructed-Response Question" for tips and information about how to complete this activity.

Question from page 29:
How can technology help endangered animals?

Step 1: Write your claim.

Complete the sentence below to write your claim in response to the question.

Technology can help endangered animals by _____

_____.

Step 2: Provide text evidence with commentary.

Write two details from the article that support your claim. You can write them in the form of direct quotations or paraphrases. Include a citation for each detail. Explain how each detail supports your claim.

Detail 1: _____

Sentence explaining how this detail supports my claim: _____

Detail 2: _____

Sentence explaining how this detail supports my claim: _____

Step 3: Write a conclusion.

Wrap it all up. End your paragraph with a strong sentence that will give your readers something to think about. One option is to refer to your central claim. Or come up with an idea of your own!

Now it's time to put it all together. And guess what? You've already done the hardest part! All that's left is to take what you just wrote and put it together into one flowing paragraph. Write your final response on a separate sheet of paper.

Remember to:

- Use transitions between sentences.
- Read your paragraph to make sure your ideas are clear. Revise as needed.
- When you are satisfied with your paragraph, read it again to make sure there are no spelling or punctuation mistakes.

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Go to Scope
Online to listen
to the words
and definitions
read aloud.

Vocabulary:

"Can the Desert Tortoise Be Saved?"

1. decoy(DEE-koi) *noun*; A decoy is a person or an object that lures someone or something into danger. *Decoy* is often used to describe a fake version of someone or something that is meant to trick an animal or a person into thinking it's real. Ducks will often land in a spot where they see other ducks. So duck hunters often use duck decoys, like this one, to attract real ducks to a particular area.

2. deter (dih-TUHR) *verb*; To deter is to discourage—to cause someone to decide not to do something or to prevent something from happening. Bad weather might deter people from attending an outdoor concert.

3. feat(feet) *noun*; A feat is an extraordinary act—an achievement showing courage, skill, or strength.

4. infectious (in-FEK-shuhs) *adjective*; An infectious disease is one that you can catch, either from another person or from an animal. (When an infectious disease can be passed from one person to another, we call that infectious disease *contagious*.) Colds are infectious. They can spread when people sneeze.

Infectious can also mean "spreading quickly," as in "Melissa's excitement was infectious. Soon everyone in the room was excited too."

5. ingenious (in-JEEN-yuhs) *adjective*; Something that is ingenious is very clever; it shows creativity and inventiveness. Some might say that the wheeled suitcase was an ingenious invention. (Before suitcases had wheels, people had to carry them by a handle. Oof.)

6. poacher (POH-chuhr) *noun*; A poacher is someone who illegally kills or captures animals. Many elephants are killed by poachers, who sell the elephants' ivory tusks. The ivory is often carved into ornaments and jewelry.

7. vulnerable (VUHL-ner-uh-buhl) *adjective*; Something that is vulnerable can easily be harmed, either physically or emotionally. You might feel vulnerable in a new place. Baby birds are vulnerable without the protection of their mother.

Directions: In the space below, list any other words from the play whose definitions you are not sure about. For each word, use context clues to try to figure out the meaning. Then look up the word in a few different dictionaries. Discuss the primary meaning of the word with your teacher or another adult. Then write a definition for the word and one example sentence using the word.

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“Can the Desert Tortoise Be Saved?” Quiz

Directions: Read “Can the Desert Tortoise Be Saved?” Then answer the questions below.

1. Which statement expresses a central idea of the article?

- (A) The Mojave Desert has an extremely hot climate.
- (B) Poachers in Africa illegally hunt elephants and sell their tusks.
- (C) The Mojave’s raven population has increased by 700 percent in recent decades.
- (D) Conservationists are using technology to help save desert tortoises.

2. On page 28, Mackenzie Carro writes that the raven population “has exploded.” Which sentence below uses *exploded* in the same way?

- (A) Dave exploded with anger.
- (B) The number of bike riders in our town exploded after the new bike lanes were created.
- (C) Kara exploded into funky dance moves as soon as she stepped onto the stage.
- (D) The model volcano I made for science class exploded all over my shirt.

3. On page 28, the author most likely included the detail about poachers in Africa to

- (A) demonstrate how precious elephants are.
- (B) show that elephants and rhinos are more important than tortoises.
- (C) provide an example of the kinds of challenges today’s conservationists face.
- (D) explain why poaching is wrong.

4. Carro’s attitude toward desert tortoises could best be described as

- (A) concerned and sympathetic.
- (B) impressed and admiring.
- (C) confused and afraid.
- (D) angry and disapproving.

5. Which lines support your answer to question 4?

- (A) “Technology is a powerful tool . . .” and “His team cleared one field of ravens in just three days . . .”
- (B) “This nightmarish scene plays out again and again in the Mojave Desert . . .” and “Can any of this be stopped?”
- (C) “They are hiding smartphones in the Amazon rainforest . . .” and “They produce garbage, which ravens eat . . .”
- (D) “In Africa, poachers are slaying rhinos . . .” and “An infectious disease threatens to wipe out Tasmanian devils.”

6. Which idea is NOT supported by the article?

- (A) Technology will soon solve all of our problems.
- (B) Humans have the power to both harm and help animals in the wild.
- (C) Scientists are developing new ways to help endangered animals.
- (D) Conservationists face challenges around the world.

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answers to the questions below on the back of this paper or type them up on a computer.

7. On page 29, Jon Hoekstra says, “Technology has given conservationists superpowers.” How does technology help the conservationists at Hardshell? Use text evidence to support your answer.

8. According to the article, what are two ways humans affect the lives of animals in the Mojave Desert? Use text evidence to support your answer.

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“Can the Desert Tortoise Be Saved?” Quiz

Directions: Read “Can the Desert Tortoise Be Saved?” Then answer the questions below.

1. Which is a central idea of the section “Superhero Scientists”?
 - Ⓐ Hardshell Labs was founded in 2014.
 - Ⓑ A disease is killing Tasmanian devils in Australia.
 - Ⓒ Poachers in Africa illegally hunt elephants and sell their tusks.
 - Ⓓ Scientists around the world are using technology to help endangered animals.
2. On page 28, author Mackenzie Carro writes that the raven population “has exploded.” She means that the raven population
 - Ⓐ is in danger.
 - Ⓑ has rapidly increased.
 - Ⓒ has remained small.
 - Ⓓ has been hit by a bomb.
3. On page 28, the author most likely included the detail about poachers in Africa to
 - Ⓐ demonstrate how precious elephants are.
 - Ⓑ show that elephants and rhinos are more important than tortoises.
 - Ⓒ provide an example of the kinds of challenges today’s conservationists face.
 - Ⓓ explain why poaching is wrong.
4. Which best describes Carro’s attitude toward desert tortoises?
 - Ⓐ sympathetic
 - Ⓑ impressed
 - Ⓒ afraid
 - Ⓓ angry
5. Which line supports your answer to question 4?
 - Ⓐ “His team cleared one field of ravens in just three days . . .”
 - Ⓑ “The bird plunges its beak into the tortoise’s shell, then flies away with the poor creature in its mouth.”
 - Ⓒ “They produce garbage, which ravens eat . . .”
 - Ⓓ “An infectious disease threatens to wipe out Tasmanian devils.”
6. Which detail should NOT be included in a summary of the article?
 - Ⓐ Jon Hoekstra worked for the World Wildlife Fund.
 - Ⓑ A company called Hardshell Labs uses technology to help the desert tortoise.
 - Ⓒ Ravens eat baby desert tortoises.
 - Ⓓ Humans moving to the Mojave has led to a huge increase in the number of ravens there.

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answers to the questions below on the back of this paper or type them up on a computer.

7. On page 29, Jon Hoekstra says, “Technology has given conservationists superpowers.” How does technology help the conservationists at Hardshell? Use text evidence to support your answer.
8. According to the article, what is one way humans affect the desert tortoises in the Mojave Desert? Use text evidence to support your answer.