

## Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing

Repackaging ideas from course texts into your own words is a useful skill to avoid accidentally plagiarizing the original source. Below are three strategies for doing so:

### Quoting

When collecting excerpts from sources to cite in your paper, type up each excerpt in a list at the bottom of your Word document. In the example below, I have put quotation marks around exact quotes from the source in my notes, so that if I include wording from the exact quote in my essay, the quotation marks in my notes will remind me that I need to properly cite that exact wording. The italicized sentences also feature me trying to reprocess the ideas from the source in my own words, thinking through how Muir's perspective relates to the argument I am making regarding the difficulty of representing Alaskan wilderness.

John Muir, *Travels in Alaska*

– Pg. 3 “wild north.”

– Pg. 8 “wild, new-born scenery.”

– Pg. 13 “To the lover of pure wildness Alaska is one of the most wonderful countries in the world. No excursion that I know of may be made into any other American wilderness where so marvelous an abundance of noble, newborn scenery is so charmingly brought to view.”

– Pg. 14 *There is something about Alaska that eludes representation. On the trip through the Alexander archipelago to Fort Wrangell and Sitka* “in these coast landscapes there is such indefinite, on-leading expansiveness, such a multitude of features without apparent redundance, their lines graduating delicately into one another in endless succession, while the whole is so fine, so tender, so ethereal, that all penwork seems hopelessly unavailing.”

*Casting around for tools adequate to representing Alaska, Muir settles for conveying to the reader a sense of Alaska's enormous spatial scale* “Some idea of the wealth of this scenery may be gained from the fact that the coast-line of Alaska is about twenty-six thousand miles long, more than twice as long as all the rest of the United States.”

– Pg. 19 “grand wild country.”

– Pg. 68 “pure wilderness.”

### Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing a quote, do not simply swap words in the original with their synonyms. Instead, try to explain the central idea of the quote in your own words, revising the sentence structure of the original as fundamentally as possible.

*Original quote:* “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

*Bad paraphrasing:* “A fowl in the fist is better than a duo in the shrub.”

*Good paraphrasing:* “Aesop’s fable of the hawk and the nightingale illustrates that being satisfied with what you already have is wiser than grasping at an uncertain promise of more.”

### Summarizing

When condensing a longer passage into your own words, try to crystallize not just its main ideas, but also how those main ideas connect to each other. Situate the passage within the context of the text as a whole, and, if relevant, articulate what the rhetorical effects are of the literary devices used.

*Original quote:* “We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro’s basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating for whites only. We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.”

*Bad summarizing:* “King shows that African-Americans are subject to police brutality. He shows that motels and hotels are segregated. He shows that African-Americans have limited upward mobility. He shows that African-Americans experience discrimination when they vote.”

*Good summarizing:* “In his famous ‘I Have a Dream’ speech, King delivers an emphatic response to an imagined interlocutor asking him when, if ever, civil rights activists will be satisfied. Through a series of examples highlighting the small and large ways African-Americans experience discrimination, from being turned away at hotels to being turned away from the voting booth, King’s repeated use of the words ‘We can never be satisfied’ creates a powerful cumulative effect.”