



WEAVING QUOTATIONS INTO WRITING: **AVOIDING COMMON PITFALLS**

Using quotations and textual evidence isn't an arbitrary exercise invented by English teachers to torture students. The purpose of using quotations is to build an airtight case for proving your thesis. If you're trying to prove something about a text, what better to use than the author's own words? This is not to say that your opinion isn't present in an analytical essay—it's there, in the background, guiding every word that you write. It's a bit of an academic game, though, to express your own opinion through the widely-accepted words of others in order to lend it some more credibility, since one person's opinion on its own holds very little analytical weight.

When you write literary analysis papers, you should put your own gut reactions to the text on the backburner, in a sense, and examine what the text itself tells you. In that way, your gut reactions can become *educated analysis*.

Your impressions/observations + Well-chosen Evidence = ARGUMENT

Common Quote-weaving Pitfalls

1. **Quote Dumping**—failing to weave the quote that you're using into an actual sentence. As a general rule, your quote should be a small part of a larger sentence that's making an analytical claim (Torvald demeans Nora when he calls her "skylark" and "spendthrift").
2. **Too much quote**—only use what you *need* from the quote/passage to prove your point. In the example above, for instance, you don't need to include the whole conversation between Nora and Torvald to make your point. Use ***important or significant words*** from the quote woven into your own analysis.
3. **Just dialogue**—You only need to use a full statement from a character in very specific situations. Don't set up dialogue (as if you're telling a story) and presume that it's "woven" into your argument (Ex. Torvald says, "...").
4. **Plot summary**—don't quote long passages that summarize events that you can otherwise (more concisely) explain yourself.
5. **Not enough analysis**—There should be about three times as much analysis as quote. In other words, one sentence to introduce your quote, three to analyze it. Focus on specific word choice, connection to theme, characterization, syntax, etc.