

Using Textual Evidence Script

This workshop has been designed for a 50-minute class, and should last no more than 45 minutes if run as efficiently as possible. This leaves extra time for longer classes which can either be used for other (non-Writing-Studio-assisted) class activity or can be put into extending the time allotted for the activities below.

Note to Consultant: While this script is full of content, it should not be seen as strict or constraining; rather, it is designed to provide guidelines upon which you can rely, but from which you can also depart. Your role in facilitating a workshop is to generate and guide conversation, so do what works for the class. Also keep in mind that if you have a way of talking with clients about textual evidence that you find more useful or that better suits your own style, then please feel free to make use of that, or even to rewrite any portion of the script for yourself—this can help to make you a more comfortable and effective facilitator. However, if you are nervous about being in front of a class and not knowing what to say, this script should provide a useful resource to which you can turn at any point.

Materials Required

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| From Writing Studio: | Index cards for minute papers; Handouts: “Effective Quotes, Paraphrases, and Summaries” , “They Say/I Say” , “Who Said What?” , & “Textual Evidence Samples” mini-highlighters and pens as give-aways |
| From Instructor: | Be sure students bring their drafts to class. And, bring thoughts about what type of claims scholars make about texts in your discipline. |
| From Students: | Draft of current assignment. Two different color pens or highlighters. |

Objectives

- Students will consider various techniques for using texts as evidence.
- Students will learn about the warranting relationship between textual evidence and their own claims.
- Students will practice writing paragraphs in which they use textual evidence to warrant their own claims.

Plan

I. Concentrated Writing Studio Presentation (5 min)

II. What is textual evidence? (5 min)

Ask students: When we write papers why do we turn to texts and how do we use them?

Write some of their responses on the blackboard.

Try to address these if students' don't mention them:

- as evidence for a claim
- to provide context for our own arguments or to show what's already been said about a topic
- as counter-evidence that we must address

Direct the same question to the instructor, with special attention to how textual evidence is employed in the context of their discipline, this course, and this assignment.

III. Activity 1—Samples (10-15 min.)

Distribute “Sample Handout.” [you might decide to do only 2 of these 3 samples – the 3rd one is particularly helpful for thinking about matching claim and warrant through textual evidence]

*Direct students to **Sample #1**; ask a student to read it aloud.*

- *Ask:* Why does the author of this passage quote the *Great Gatsby*? How successfully does the author do so?
 - If students do not recognize as much, point out that “this is a passage in which quotations are being used entirely for the sake of summarizing plot. The author is making **no claims** for himself/herself.”
- *Distribute **They Say/I Say** handout.* Explain that **quotations work best when they evidence claims**. In order for them to do this work, an author needs to make claims in the first place. This handout includes some of the most common types of claims.
- *Ask the instructor:* When engaging with texts, what types of claims do scholars in your field make?

*Direct students to **Sample #2**; ask a student to read it aloud.*

Ask the following:

- What is the claim?
- What is the evidence for this claim?
- How successful is this paragraph?
 - If students do not see the problem, point out that although the claim is, “The automobile in Erskine Caldwell’s *Tobacco Road* operates as the central catalyst for plot development, and promises the prospect of change to improve not only Dude and Bessie’s lives, but the entire South too,” it is not explained how the quotation warrants the claim.

Much of the work of using evidence is in explaining how it warrants, or justifies, one’s claims. The text doesn’t need to say your point exactly, but you do need to explain why it justifies, or makes believable, the point you are making.

Now that that you know about warrants, let's turn to **Sample #3**.

*Direct students to **Sample #3**; ask a student to read it aloud*

- What is the claim?
 - If they do not recognize it, point out that it is: “Since they do this inadvertently, it proves the government was successful in completely altering the Japanese family’s lives because it has become habit to slip into the uniformity they were forced to live for so many years.”
- Is this claim supported by the evidence? (no: we don’t, for example, know that simply because they sleep in a certain place, their lives have been completely altered by the government.)
- What can be done to revise this passage?
 - Suggest that either the claim needs to be narrowed (for example: “since they do this inadvertently, it proves that the influence of the internment camp doesn’t end with the family’s release,” or the warrant needs to be expanded (for example, the author might include several different examples of the way the family recreates camp-life once back at home).

When working on your own writing, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does this quotation make the EXACT point my paper requires? Could it be read or interpreted in some other way? [This will help you determine the strength of the link between your claim and the evidence. You may also decide that you either need to change your claim in light of the quotation or choose a different quotation to prove your point.]
2. Have I explained or elaborated upon the quotation, or have I let the quotation make my point for me?

IV. Activity 2—Your Own Claims and Evidence (20-25 min.)

Instruct the students to turn to their drafts. Ask them to skim through their own text highlighting or underlining, ideally in two different colors, every claim they make and what counts as evidence for each claim, especially where the evidence is a quotation. Give them only about 12 minutes, even if they don’t get through all the pages, then ask some reflection questions for 5 minutes.

[Could ask them to get into groups of two or three to discuss when they found, how well each attempt uses its evidence to warrant its claim, as well as how it might be revised.]

- Are you seeing patterns emerge? That is, are quotations and analysis following after claims and providing warrant for the claim?
- Are claims coming too close together without sufficient unpacking of the quoted evidence?
- Is each quotation being introduced such that the reader knows who said it and its purpose in the paper.

- Are you finding too many quotations or too few? Maybe engage the professor to talk about what is expected, whether anything in the assignment indicates the degree to which the students ought to engage with course materials or outside sources.

With the last 5-7 minutes ask the students to revise one section of their paper where they found some problem or disconnect between the quotation and warrant. Distribute the “Who Said What?” handout to help them think about how to introduce the quotations.

V. Final Reflection and wrap up (2 min)

A quotation is not always necessary, sometimes a summary or paraphrase will do. We don’t have time to discuss this today, but I want to leave you with this handout from the Writing Studio that discusses the differences among and the uses of each.

Distribute the “Effective Quotes, Paraphrases, and Summaries” handout.

VI. Minute Paper

Distribute the index cards and ask the students to answer (anonymously) one question on each side.

Question 1: What is the most important thing you’ve learned about writing with texts today?

Question 2: What questions or concerns do you still have regarding using textual evidence?

Collect these responses. If time permits, it might be worthwhile to read some or all, especially of Question 1, aloud. And possibly also to invite brief answers to the concerns raised in Question 2, if you decide to read any of those.

Remember, you can make an appointment with a writing consultant to discuss your paragraphs or any aspect of the writing process.