

Forwarding Sources Rhetorically

The Signal Phrase + Quote + Interpretation Formula

When writing an analytical paper you will want to incorporate textual evidence to complicate and support your thesis. Textual evidence is comprised of two things: the texts you use + your analysis. When we use other sources, scholarly or non-scholarly, we always want to provide some kind of rhetorical context for them. Let's think about the difference between a strong quote and a weak one. A strong use of a quote incorporates many things: **a good lead-in, the actual quote, and then our use of the quote.** A "weak" use of quotation is when the quote is just "dropped" into the paper, without an introduction or explanation to frame it.

1). The Signal Phrase. Readers need a smooth transition from your words to the words of your source. Provide clear signal phrases to prepare readers for a passage you will paraphrase, a quotation, or a summary.

Some model signal phrases:

acknowledges, adds, admits, agrees, argues, asserts, believes, claims, comments, compares, confirms, contends, declares, denies, disputes, emphasizes, endorses, grants, illustrates, implies, insists, notes, observes, points out, reasons, refutes, rejects, reports, responds, suggests, thinks, writes.

A few examples:

As Naomi Klein **argues**, "..."
Naomi Klein, a well-known journalist, **points out** "..."

2). The Quote. You will follow your signal phrase with the passage you will paraphrase, a quotation, or a summary. Remember to use quotes wisely—choose a quote with really vivid language or one that you have trouble expressing in your own words.

A few examples:

Dyson, like many others, contends, "Homeland Security failed miserably in mobilizing resources to rescue Katrina survivors without food, water, or shelter" (4).

Dyson may suggest that Homeland Security didn't do its job, but Bush clarifies, in his memoir, that "The government prestaged more than 3.7 million liters of water, 4.6 million pounds of ice, 1.86 million meals ready to eat, and 33 medical teams" (314).

3). How you use the source. This last step is imperative. This is where you interpret or analyze your source material. You can't expect every reader to see or understand the same things that you see and understand from your sources. You have to take time to interpret the source before making connections to new ideas or other sources. You can then make connections between sources, and/or make connections between your sources and your thesis.

An example:

Dyson, like many others, contends, "Homeland Security failed miserably in mobilizing resources to rescue Katrina survivors without food, water, or shelter" (4). This suggests that the government agency assigned to protect citizens was unable to deliver, when given the ultimate test. This claim should give U.S. citizens great cause for concern. Was Dyson correct in his accusation? Dyson may suggest that Homeland Security didn't do its job, but George W. Bush clarifies, in his memoir, that "The government prestaged more than 3.7 million liters of water, 4.6 million pounds of ice, 1.86 million meals ready to eat, and 33 medical teams" (314). That is, Bush explains that the government "prestaged," or had ready before the storm, ample water, food, and medical supplies. One would assume that the former president is accurate in his assessment of the resources available before the storm. This disparity between the scholar and the former president is alarming. Dyson's language states that Homeland Security failed to "mobilize" the goods; Bush's language suggests that the goods were "prestaged." Does this mean that even though everything was at-the-ready, the government didn't deliver those supplies in a timely fashion? This kind of disparity of accounts is common in stories and analyses of the disaster. It is important to examine the language that the writers use to describe....