

Wilma Wildcat

Honors 10

8thPeriod

13 December 2021

Documented Essay on a Biography and *What the Biographer Wrote*

Your essay on *What the Biographer Wrote* should focus on a topic narrow enough to be covered adequately in 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages. Your essay should not summarize, but rather reveal careful thought and analysis. The effective, attention-getting first paragraph should end in a thesis like the following: “In *The Russian Revolution*, Richard Pipes has redefined Lenin’s destructive genius, pensive personality, and historical impact.”¹ Notice how dual thesis components sound “smarter” than genius, personality, and impact.

In writing an analytical review, you must document everything that you borrow – not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas. Common sense, as well as ethics, should determine what you document. For example, you do not need to give sources for familiar proverbs, well-known quotations, or common knowledge, but you must indicate the source of any appropriated material that readers might otherwise mistake for your own.

An exact quote shorter than three lines is set off by quotation marks and integrated within the paragraph. For example, “Power emanated from the little bald man” as if he were really a giant (123). Parentheses are at the *end* of the sentence no matter where the quotation appears and the end punctuation comes *after* the parentheses.

Exact quotes longer than three lines are indented and set off from the text of the paper, but are not enclosed in quotation marks – the *inset* itself distinguishes the lines as quotes. Note:

Lenin bequeathed his personal style to the Soviet state: disciplined and conspiratorial, comfortable with violence. While exhorting other people to take up a gun, revolver, bomb, knife, brass knuckles, or rag soaked in kerosene, Lenin himself had a cowardly side (29).

Any quote worthy of such prominence should be set up beforehand and explained afterwards

¹Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, New York: Knopf, 1990, 21. Page references to this edition will be noted in text.

within your own paragraph. The paper might continue by giving specific examples to prove the contradiction between Lenin's violent and cowardly sides. The paper would include "exact quotes as relevant and necessary" throughout the text, documenting exact page numbers in parentheses (120).

The previous page has a *real* footnote which can be used if the majority of your quotes come from one source. You can cite your source the first time, and then cite only page numbers after that. A second use for footnotes is for more elaborate explanation of something in the text. Everything else is parenthetical.

If you include quotes from critics or reviewers, cite those sources parenthetically. For example, I could refer to Carl Niemeyer's review "*The Russian Revolution Revisited*" in *College English* by citing the title and all particulars in the same sentence as a quote from the review, but that would become burdensome and awkward. Better to say, Niemeyer states that "Pipes uses juxtaposition to express sophisticated, balanced reflections on Lenin's true nature" (241). If the author's name is not in your sentence, include it in the parentheses. I could also say Pipes uses juxtaposition to reveal Lenin's personality (Niemeyer 241). Even though the previous sentence does not quote the review word-for-word, I took the idea of juxtaposition from the critic and need to give credit to avoid plagiarism.

If you cite such additional works, acknowledges those sources in a works cited page; however, this report may focus exclusively on the *one* approved biography.

Essentially, your book report is an essay – thesis sentence and all – with at least three major components -- and represents a critique of a biography. In approximately 500-750 words, a good review must prove the thesis, cite specific evidence, and include at least one quotation per body paragraph. Your review should demonstrate that you read *and* understood. Your grade will depend on the quality of your writing, the skill with which you support your opinions, and the appropriate use of textual references.

Notice some other MLA style details, such as heading on the left first page, last name and page number on following pages, 12-point Times font, with one-inch margins. No *I*'s, no *you*'s, no contractions. This paper is spaced 1.5 to fit on one page; yours should be double-spaced.