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English II

3rd Hour

13 March 2010

Documented Essay on a Writer and *What The Writer Wrote*

Your essay on *What the Writer Wrote* should focus on a topic narrow enough to be covered adequately in 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages. Your essay should not summarize, but rather reveal careful thought and analysis. The effective, attention-getting first paragraph would end in a thesis like the following: “In *The Russian Revolution*, Richard Pipes has redefined Lenin’s destructive genius, pensive personality, and historical impact.”

In writing a research paper, 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 (“You can not judge a book by its cover”), well-known quotations (“We shall overcome”), or common knowledge (“George Washington was the first president of the United States”). 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. 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 serves to distinguish the lines as quotes. Any necessary explanations of the quote should be integrated within your own paragraph. Note how the following paragraph handles partial quotes within the inset:

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.¹

The paper would 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

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

necessary” throughout the text, documenting exact page numbers in parentheses (120). For example, “Power emanated from the little bald man” as if he were really a giant (123). Notice that the parentheses are at the *end* of the sentence no matter where the quotation appears and the period comes *after* the parentheses.

You might also have noticed that the previous page has a real footnote. In MLA style, a footnote is only used if the majority of your quotes come from one source, so you can give the information once, 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.

An important additional distinction is the proper way to integrate quotes from critics and to cite those sources parenthetically. For example, I could refer to Carl Niemeyer’s article “The Coral Island Revisited” in *College English* by citing the title and all particulars in my sentence with the quote, but that would become burdensome and awkward. A better choice, Niemeyer states that “Golding is using a naive literary form to express sophisticated reflections on the nature of man and society” (241). If you do not include the author in your sentence, then you must include it in the parentheses. I could also say Golding uses a simple literary form to express sophisticated ideas (Niemeyer 241). Even though the previous sentence does not quote word-for-word, I took the idea from the critic and need to give credit to avoid plagiarism.

The list of works cited at the end of your research paper acknowledges those sources; it does not in itself provide sufficiently detailed and precise documentation. The most practical way to supply this information is to insert brief parenthetical acknowledgments in your paper wherever you incorporate another’s words or ideas.

Essentially, your research paper is an essay – thesis sentence and all – and represents a critique of literature, supported by approved critical resources. In approximately 750-1000 words, a good research paper must prove the thesis, cite specific evidence, and include at least one quotation per body paragraph. Your research paper 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 research resources.

Notice some other 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; yours should be double-spaced.