

- **Tips for writing and analyzing text**

- Always assume that your reader has read the text you are analyzing. Do not summarize the story, poem, novel, film, etc. unless directed to do so by an instructor. Avoid plot summary. When referring to a particular scene in the text, do not summarize everything about it because your reader has read it before.

For example, you can write:

“The girl often suggests that they have another drink to get the man off the topic of the operation. She uses the drinks to escape from the pain of discussing the abortion.”

instead of:

“In this story, a man and a girl are waiting in a train station in Spain. At first, they do not speak of anything but the hills and their drinks. Then the man tries to convince her to have an abortion, but she does not want to. The girl often suggests that they have another drink to get the man off the topic of the operation. She uses the drinks to escape from the pain of discussing the abortion.”

(from Hemingway’s short story *Hills Like White Elephants*)

- Always use the present tense when describing what happens in a text or what the author is doing in that text.

For example:

“Hemingway *describes* the train station” not “Hemingway *described*...”

“The man *is* in control of the relationship” not “The man *was* in control...”

- Always choose the best, most relevant examples and quotes to support your position.
- Use a Three-Step Process for creating effective body paragraphs:
 - State your claim/assertion about your topic
ex: The girl decides not to have an abortion.
 - Describe specific examples from the text that prove your assertion. Include a quote or two from your best examples.
ex: the change in her dialogue, the description of the setting, her last lines
 - Explain exactly how your examples prove your assertion.
ex: Hemingway’s description of the setting around the train station proves that the girl decides against the operation because...
- Introduce your quotes:
 - Set the scene for the quote. Your reader should know if this is the narrator or a character speaking and what he/she is referencing. Don’t let the quote speak for itself.
 - Include the quote with proper citations.
 - Always explain how your quote is relevant to what you are arguing. Don’t just leave it hanging.

For example:

As the girl speaks of the hills looking like white elephants, she reveals that she has something else on her mind. She says that the hills “don’t really look like white elephants. I just meant the coloring of their skin through the trees” (Hemingway 481). Her use of the word “skin” implies that she is not thinking about hills, but about some kind of animal with white skin—perhaps the baby that she is carrying.

See how smoothly that quote was integrated into the second sentence. Remember that not only can quotes not stand alone as sentences, but that they should be integrated smoothly into other existing sentences.

Here are some awkward/wordy ways to integrate quotes that you do not want to use:

As she says in this quote, “They don’t really look like white elephants...”

It is shown in this quote, “They don’t really look like white elephants...”

This is shown when she says, “They don’t really look like white elephants...”

Hemingway uses her quote, “They don’t really look like white elephants...”

Here are some better ways to integrate quotes into your writing:

She says, “They don’t really look like white elephants...”

...she reveals that she has something else on her mind: “They don’t really look like white elephants...”