

Using Sources / Academic English 11

Five different ways to use source material in a research paper

The following excerpt was taken from an essay by Toni Morrison entitled “The Site of Memory.”

... no slave society in the history of the world wrote more -- or more thoughtfully -- about its own enslavement. The milieu, however, dictated the purpose and the style. The narratives are instructive, moral, and obviously representative. Some of them are patterned after the sentimental novel that was in vogue at the time. But whatever the level of eloquence or the form, popular taste discouraged the writers from dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience.(109)

Here are five different ways to use the material in a research paper.

1. Quote the material directly.

“The narratives are instructive, moral, and obviously representative” (Morrison 109).
(Notice the author’s name then page number WITHOUT a comma).

2. Work the quoted passage into the syntax of your sentence.

Morrison points out that social context prevented the authors of slave narratives “from dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience” (109).
(Notice this combines your words with the author’s exact words to make a complete sentence. If there is no author, use book title... the Collier’s Encyclopedia states...).

3. Set off the quoted passage with an introductory sentence followed by a colon (this is reserved for long quotations) called a Block Quote.

Toni Morrison, in “The Site of Memory,” explains how social context shaped slave narratives:

... no slave society in the history of the world wrote more -- or more thoughtfully -- about its own enslavement. The milieu, however, dictated the purpose and the style. The narratives are instructive, moral, and obviously representative. Some of them are patterned after the sentimental novel that was in vogue at the time. But whatever the level of eloquence or the form, popular taste discouraged the writers from dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience.(109)

(Notice the period goes BEFORE the page number in block quotes)

4. Paraphrase of a short quotation (putting it into your own words without changing the meaning; notice no quotes needed)

Slave narratives sometimes imitated the popular fiction of their era (Morrison 109).

5. Summary of a long quotation (again, your own words; no quotes needed).

Award-winning novelist **Toni Morrison** argues that although slaves wrote many powerful narratives, the context of their enslavement prevented them from telling the whole truth about their lives (109). (notice when her name is in the text, it’s not needed at the end).