Literature Guide

Essay Writing, Presentations, Research
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Introductory Note

Part I of the Literature Guide deals with the content, structure, and layout of critical essays, and Part II focuses on oral presentations. Since the problem of source acknowledgment is relevant to both critical essays and oral presentations (e.g. for handouts, but also on PowerPoint slides or overhead transparencies), this topic is treated alongside with research in Part III.
PART I
THE CRITICAL ESSAY
CHAPTER ONE: BASICS

THE LITERATURE ESSAY VS. THE LINGUISTICS PAPER

The literature essay and the linguistics paper each have a different function and therefore require a different style and format.

- The literature essay (referred to in this guide as the critical essay) presents a focused interpretation of a text or texts developed in the form of a specific argument or thesis. In other words, the critical essay develops a central, arguable claim.\(^1\)

- The linguistics paper usually attempts to support or refute a hypothesis (i.e. a statement that can be proved or disproved) by analyzing and interpreting a particular set of empirical data.

This Study Guide applies specifically to the demands of the critical essay. Note, however, that Chapters 3 and 4 of the Study Guide, as well as the material on essay and paragraph organization in Chapter 2, apply to writing in English in general.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

1) The critical essay must first and foremost present an argument. A purely descriptive or summarizing essay is therefore inadequate. For instance, it is not sufficient to demonstrate the versification in a poem, nor is it enough to present a catalogue of information from secondary sources. Such elements are the analytical tools that help you to support your overall argument, but they cannot replace the argument.

2) The structure of a critical essay should be internal to the essay, not external. Rather than consisting of short, individually labeled sections, an essay should consist of

- a thesis statement
- paragraphs which correspond to the steps of the argument
- a topic sentence to each paragraph
- paragraph transitions

Internalized structure in the critical essay makes for a more fluid argument, which will

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\(^1\) Another important type of essay is the expository essay. Its function is to acquaint readers with a body of knowledge. In such an essay, you would explain the relevant aspects of a problem and thus demonstrate your own knowledge of a given topic, but not try to persuade your readers. Note, however, that any paper you write in the course of your studies at the English Department should be a critical essay that puts forward an argument and tries to convince the reader of your particular point of view.
ultimately be more persuasive to your reader. It is also simply the convention of writing in Anglo-American literary criticism.

3) Begin the essay early, so that you have time to revise it before turning it in. The first draft of an essay will require not just correction (fixing mistakes), but also revision (rewriting according to argumentational and structural needs). Give yourself enough time so that you can put the first draft aside for a day or two; when you return to it, you will be better able to see – and rewrite – any flaws or imperfections in its argument and structure.

**FORMAL LAYOUT OF THE CRITICAL ESSAY**

If you have been taught the conventions of German-language composition, you may have to “unlearn” certain writing practices. This booklet will help to familiarize you with the textual norms and conventions that apply specifically to the Anglo-American critical essay. In a nutshell, the Anglo-American critical essay is distinguished from both the German-language composition and the linguistics paper by a minimum of scaffolding, i.e. no or limited use of table of contents, enumerated headings, as well as subsections and sub-subsections.

1. **Title**

   Papers of all lengths should have a title that is ideally both informative and interest awakening. The title should contain basic information about your primary text(s) (i.e. author, title), as well as one or more keywords to describe the focus of your essay. Anglo-American writers often use two-part titles, in which the first part is an interest-awakening phrase – possibly even a quote – and the second part is informative (e.g. Jaime Hovey. “Kissing a Negress in the Dark': Englishness as a Masquerade in Woolf’s Orlando.” PMLA 112.3 (1997): 393-404).

2. **Table of Contents**

   A table of contents becomes necessary only if the work is long enough to be divided into chapters (e.g. the Masterarbeit). In shorter papers, the thematic scope of your argument should become evident in the title and introductory paragraph(s). Do not, therefore, use a table of contents in any of the other literature papers you have to write at the English Department.

3. **Chapters**

   A chapter is an organizational unit of a book or a monograph (i.e. a separate treatise on a specific theme). Chapters are conventionally between 15 and 30 pages in length.

   A Masterarbeit (20,000-30,000 words, i.e. 60-90 pages) should be formatted like a book. It should be divided into chapters, including a separate Introduction and Conclusion, and have a table of contents. Each chapter, like longer critical essays, may itself be divided into sections (see points 4 and 5).
4. Sections
Separate sections are appropriate only in a paper of 15 or more pages. They are optional (and can be a useful organizational tool). These sections should be 4- or 5-page blocks held together by topic sentences and paragraph transitions in order to keep the argument fluid.
Sections may be marked by headings alone, by headings after Roman numerals (i.e. I, II, etc.), or by Roman numerals alone. If you choose to have headings for each section, these headings should be thematic rather than functional (e.g. “The Role of the Unnamed Woman,” not “Introduction,” “Analysis,” or “Conclusion”).

5. Subsections
German-language composition favors subsections in papers of all lengths (e.g 1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1, etc.), but this is not the case in the Anglo-American critical essay. In keeping with the conventions for the critical essay, do not use subsections.

6. Introduction and Conclusion headings
In papers that are not long enough to have separate chapters, the introduction and conclusion take no separate headings. The essay simply begins with the introductory paragraph, and goes directly into the conclusion from the end of the development. If the introduction and conclusion in a longer paper are separate sections, they will take thematic headings (e.g. “Shakespeare’s Prose” or “Criticism, Fiction, and Ideology”).

7. Basic formal requirements

- Your paper must be word-processed and **spell-checked** before you hand it in. (Most word processing applications contain a spell checker, and there are free spell checkers available on the Internet.)

- Please use **1.5-line-spacing** throughout your paper (except in block quotes, see Part III: Source Acknowledgment), and **use a serif font** to make the text more legible.

- Leave **margins of 2.5–3 cm** on both sides of the text.

- You should **indent the first line of each paragraph unless it follows a title** (i.e. do not indent the very first paragraph of the essay and the first paragraph of each section).

- The **title page** should include the course title, the instructor’s name, and the title of your paper in the top half, and your name, address, e-mail address and phone number as well as the date (e.g. June 2006) near the bottom of the page (see Appendix: Sample Paper).

- Begin **page numbers** on the first page of the text with ”1” (i.e. do not paginate the title page).
Summary
The different categories of papers have different structural requirements. A shorter paper (< 15 pages) has a title, no table of contents, no sections, and no separate Introduction and Conclusion headings. A longer paper (15–25 pages) may have section headings but should not have subheadings or separate Introduction and Conclusion headings. A Masterarbeit is usually 20,000-30,000 words, i.e. 60–90 pages, in length. It has a table of contents, chapters (including separate Introduction and Conclusion), and perhaps (though not necessarily so) separate sections within the chapters.

THE READER

Definition of the “ideal reader”
Assume a reader who is intelligent enough to follow your argument. You can assume basic familiarity with (but not detailed knowledge of) the primary text(s). Writing for this kind of general reader will mean that you learn to write for a broader audience, rather than just writing for your instructor.

Remember that writing is something you do in order to be read by others (who are all embodied in the concept of the "ideal reader"). You should therefore always write with your ideal reader in mind. When you revise an essay, keep asking yourself, “is this clear?” and “is this interesting?” from the ideal reader's point of view. Imagine that the aim of the critical essay is not just to present your argument persuasively, but also to draw the ideal reader into thinking along with you.

Do not just write for your instructor
Never assume that your reader already knows what you mean. Every reader notices different details in a text and thinks through these details differently. This means that you can never expect that your reader, even if he or she is very familiar with the primary text, will have noticed the same network of textual facts or have had the same thoughts about them. Thus you first have to prepare your reader to follow your argument by providing the context necessary for your argument; then you must take your reader through every step of your argument’s development. Do not assume that the readers of your essay think in the same way that you do; assume instead that they are critical thinkers willing to be convinced by a compelling argument.

USING GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS
The convention of using he as the indefinite personal pronoun is dying out. In the last ten years, readers have become so sensitive to gendered pronouns in English that using he as a universal pronoun sounds both insulting to many people, particularly to women, and obsolete. Here are five conventionalized ways to use gender-neutral pronouns, with comments about their respective advantages and disadvantages. It is best to choose one of these conventions and use it consistently in your writing.
1. **He or she**

This is the oldest and most traditional way to indicate gender-neutrality in the indefinite personal pronoun. Rather than using just the male form, you also include the female form as a possibility: *he or she, him or her, and his or her*. The disadvantage of this method for many people is that the extra words tend to clutter up the text.

2. **S/he**

The pronoun *s/he* includes both female and male forms, and has the advantage of being quite compact. The problem, however, comes with the direct object and possessive forms; with this method, you have to write *her/him and her/his*, respectively, which strikes some people as being cumbersome.

3. **Alternating she and he**

Some writers use *she* throughout one paragraph, then *he* throughout the next, and so on. This method has the disadvantage of confusing your reader, who may not at first be able to figure out why your *she* has suddenly become a *he*.

4. **Just she**

Some writers have simply opted to turn the centuries-old tradition of taking *he* for the universal term on its head, and they use *she* as the indefinite personal pronoun. This has the advantage of not generating extra words, but you should be aware that this method might be seen by some as a political intervention into language use.

5. **They**

Spoken English (especially American English) has now adopted the plural third-person pronoun as the indefinite pronoun form of *singular* nouns (e.g. “What a crazy driver! Are they drunk?”). This is still not acceptable in written English because of the grammatical discrepancy between the singular noun and the plural pronoun. You can, however, strive to use the *plural* form of the indefinite personal noun wherever possible, thereby justifying the use of *they, them and their* (e.g. “Since writers dislike encumbering their texts with unnecessary words, they often prefer the plural form of the indefinite personal pronoun.”).
CHAPTER TWO: ESSAY STRUCTURE

ESSAY COHESION
An essay consists of the following elements. Please note that the number and length of paragraphs will vary depending on the structural requirements of your argument. The paragraphs break your argument down into argumentative steps, but of course they should neither be too long (don’t have paragraphs that are longer than a page) or too short (don’t have five-line paragraphs).

1) Introductory paragraph(s) which
   • present(s) the problem or issue to be addressed
   • provide(s) necessary background material
   • state(s) the thesis

2) Developmental paragraphs which break the thesis down into logically coherent topics or supporting reasons that
   • are consistent with the thesis
   • develop one main idea per paragraph
   • develop the thesis fully
   • gather momentum, so that the least important points come first and the most important ones towards the end

3) Concluding paragraph(s) which
   • remain(s) consistent with the thesis, but do(es) not simply repeat it
   • extend(s) the thesis to its logical conclusions
   • “round(s) off” the essay
INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH(S)

Definition
An introduction serves three functions:

1) to attract the reader’s interest
2) to focus that interest on the thesis
3) to provide a context for the thesis

Form
Think of the introduction as consisting of three parts:

1) an opening sentence which presents the topic and attracts the reader’s interest
2) contextualization of the argument, consisting of
   a) any necessary background information
   b) a presentation of the terms or ideas central to the argument
3) a thesis statement (see below)

Bear in mind, however, that there are different ways of beginning a critical essay. For instance, you may choose to begin with an example which illustrates the central problem you address in your paper, or else you may begin by directly announcing the core research interest of the essay.

The opening sentence
The opening sentence should primarily draw the reader into wanting to read the essay; this is more important than simply presenting information. Do not, therefore, open your essay with a “planning” sentence, e.g. “In this paper I will analyze ....,” as such a sentence fails to interest the reader.

Simultaneously, the opening sentence should be substantive, i.e. it should say something. Do not open your essay with a generalization, unless it serves as a springboard into a related, more particular point in the next sentence.

Consider the following sentence: “Over the centuries, Hamlet has generated many critical responses.” Alone, such a sentence fails to say anything, though it becomes acceptable if the next sentence refers to a specific critical response or critical debate about Hamlet.

Background information
In the introduction, you should announce key concepts used in the paper that are either not self-explanatory or not part of common knowledge (these may range from an innocent phrase like “epic elements” to a brief overview of Wittgenstein’s notion of private language, if either of these are crucial to your argument). You should also provide narrative/textual information, but only that which
the reader needs to understand your thesis; you should never provide an entire plot summary in the introduction (or indeed anywhere). You may also furnish historical background, but only if it is relevant to your thesis. Do not provide a biographical sketch of the author (either in the introduction or later) unless it is entirely relevant to your thesis.

The “necessity test” for background information

Include whatever information the reader needs in order to accept the premise of your thesis, and no more.

Length

The introduction should be approximately 10% of the essay. This means, roughly, that a 5- to 10-page paper will have a one-paragraph introduction (between half a and a whole page in length), while a 15- to 25-page paper may have a 2- to 3-page introduction broken into a number of paragraphs.

Common error

Do not construct your introduction out of promises, e.g. “In this paper I will discuss... After a definition of ... I will talk about ... An analysis of ... will follow.” Such a catalogue of planning statements tends to take the place of both substantive background information and a thesis statement. Worse, it teases your reader by holding out unsubstantiated promises rather than preparing the actual argument.

Sample introductions

Example 1:

Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw has, since its publication, given rise to a bulk of utterly conflicting interpretations. Each interpretation claims to be, if not true, then at least plausible or in some other way justified. This “intellectual scandal”, as Freundlieb calls it, cannot but lead one to question the value and significance or even justification of interpretative statements. Is a “correct” interpretation possible? Can the “true” meaning of a text ever be traced? Is there any “true” meaning at all? In this paper I shall argue that the frantic search for meaning does not start with critical readings of The Turn of the Screw, but in fact within the text itself. Henry James confronts the reader with cases of failed interpretations of particular events or at least with interpretations that can never be verified. Taking this as James’s general statement about the significance of interpretations means that no such thing as a “correct” or “objective” interpretation exists. One can assume in The Turn of the Screw that each stage in the process of writing down, reading, re-reading, even re-writing - in short, handing down the events as they happened at Bly - involves a subjective interpretative act. In the case of the main protagonist, the governess, this may even be a conscious act of interpretation, since she is aware that she constantly attributes meaning to her surroundings. Similarly, though not always consciously, each of the characters in The Turn of the Screw can be said to actually participate in the writing of the text.

Example 2:

Note that the example below follows the logic of moving towards ever more particular information with each sentence (excluding the opening sentence). This is a good way of structuring an introduction so that the reader gradually “slides” into the most particular statement of the argument, the thesis.
Maintaining youth and beauty is more than just a question of finding the right lotions to keep the skin smooth. At a certain point one also has to ask why s/he buys these lotions at all. The conditions that demand the maintenance of beauty have little to do with "natural" aesthetics; rather, people are driven by a powerful commercial imperative designed to feed off of their anxieties about social belonging. The beauty enterprises and multinationals are built on the maxim of profit-oriented exploitation, which influences personal lives with invisible but effective consequences. These enterprises do not answer a need in the population, but create the very need which their products can then assuage. Women in particular suffer from such effects, not least because they are the direct targets of beauty advertising. Advertisements for cosmetics notoriously represent women in such a way as to produce a sense of inadequacy in the female spectator, which directly translates into money spent by the female consumer.

THE THESIS STATEMENT

Definition
The thesis statement is the concise and specific statement of the essay's argument, conventionally located at or near the end of the introductory paragraph or, in a longer paper (≥ 20 pages), at the end of the introductory section. In order to have a thesis statement, you must have a thesis, i.e. an arguable interpretation of the primary text(s).

Form
The thesis statement must

1) be specific to the argument of the essay

2) be an arguable point (i.e. intelligible, but not obviously the case; thus, a statement beginning with "It is obvious that..." cannot be a thesis)

3) match the length of the essay in its scope (i.e. a short essay can only convincingly develop a narrow argument, while a longer essay should make a broader argument)

4) be within the range of something that you can actually claim without resorting to generalizations, unfounded assertions and associative assumptions; in other words, the scope and nature of the argument must be feasible

Test of a good thesis statement
Imagine showing your thesis statement to someone who is knowledgeable about your topic; from this statement alone, the two of you should be able to have a debate about your thesis. If you can’t challenge and debate it, then it’s not an argument.

Examples

GOOD: Hamlet, despite its title, is less a play about one man's moral and mortal uncertainty, than about the medieval court politics which positioned a few individuals as carriers of the historical moment.

BAD: Hamlet shows Shakespeare's abundant skill at characterization and use of metaphor. (Problems: it's too general and it doesn't make an argument)
ALSO BAD: The description of the imagery of swans will be the central point of this paper. (Problem: a description is not an argument)

Stylistic suggestion

You do not need to precede the thesis statement with the phrase, “In this paper I will show/argue that [...].” This pointer is unnecessary if the thesis statement is a clear presentation of a strong argument. If the thesis presents a weak argument, on the other hand, then the pointer by itself will not strengthen it. Moreover, the pointer breaks the flow from the previous sentence into the thesis statement.

Possible elaboration of the thesis statement in Masterarbeiten

You may include a projected essay-organization at the end of the introduction, after the thesis statement, but only as an elaboration of the thesis. Note that, if your paper is structured well, such an essay plan may not be useful since the structure of your paper will become clear from the essay itself (and also from the table of contents).

Example

Yeats’ attitude to the Irish nation is infinitely more ambivalent than Edward Said describes, and in many ways Yeats seems to identify far more with a colonial than with a decolonizing stance (thesis). In this essay, I shall trace two key aspects of post-colonial literatures – the concern with nation and the concern with the dismantling of the master narratives of the colonizers – through three of Yeats’ final poems, in order to show where I feel the limitations of this post-colonial interpretation of Yeats lie (elaboration of thesis as projected essay-organization that does not merely outline what you will do in your essay, but also why you will do it).

THE PARAGRAPH

Definition

The paragraph is a unit of an essay that visually and structurally corresponds to one step or developmental point of your argument.

Visual form

1) The first sentence of the paragraph should be indented from the margin.

2) Each sentence thereafter follows on the same line as the previous sentence.
Example

A ____________________________________________________________.
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Exceptions to the indentation rule

• Do not indent a new paragraph if it follows a title or a heading (i.e. the first paragraph of an essay will not be indented).

• After a block quotation, the next sentence will usually not be indented because the paragraph should go on to elaborate the quotation. In the rare case of a paragraph ending with a block quotation, the new paragraph that follows will be indented.

Structural form

1) Each paragraph must have a **topic sentence** (see below), which introduces the topic or theme to be developed in the paragraph.

2) Each sentence in a paragraph must follow **logically** from the previous sentence.

Common errors

• Do not write a “mini-paragraph,” i.e. a few sentences, which thematically belong to the previous paragraph but which mysteriously begin on a new line at the margin. You cannot, in other words, indicate a “mini-break” in the middle of a paragraph by beginning a sentence on a new line.

• Beware of writing a paragraph that contains only a few sentences (i.e. two or three). A paragraph has to fully develop a step in your argument. If the paragraph is shorter than, say, three sentences, you may have either failed to develop the point fully or, even worse, the point may not be substantial enough to warrant a separate step in the argument of your essay.

• Do not leave a blank line between paragraphs to indicate a conceptual break (such as between the introduction and the beginning of the development of the argument). Simply make a paragraph transition (see below) as between any other paragraphs.

A coherent paragraph consists of the following three parts

1) A strong **topic sentence** (i.e. controlling idea) which
• provides the main idea of the paragraph

• delimits the idea developed in the paragraph (i.e. everything discussed in the paragraph should be consistent with the topic sentence)

2) **Elaborations, examples or supporting points** which

• are consistent with the topic

• develop the topic fully

• are logically linked to each other according to the order in which they appear

3) **A concluding sentence** which

• remains consistent with the topic and supporting points

• “rounds off” the topic

THE TOPIC SENTENCE

Definition
The topic sentence introduces the topic or theme to be developed in the paragraph. Conventionally, it is the first sentence of the paragraph, though it may be the second sentence in those cases where a paragraph transition takes up the entire first sentence.

Form
A good topic sentence puts forward an arguable point and consists of two parts:

1) **a focus**, i.e. the topic itself

2) **a direction**, i.e. an indication of how the topic will be developed in the paragraph

Examples

**GOOD:** The wind can be understood as a symbol for the protagonist's desire (focus), though this desire fails to have a clear object (direction).

**BAD:** The wind can be understood as a symbol for desire. (Problem: There is a focus but no direction.)

**ALSO BAD – the narrative topic sentence:** The story opens with the protagonist in mid-conversation. (Problem: A topic sentence that describes a narrative situation has no clear focus.)
PARAGRAPH TRANSITIONS

Definition
A paragraph transition serves to link the point developed in the previous paragraph with the point to be developed in the new paragraph.

Form
A paragraph transition can take one of the two following forms:

1) the opening phrase or clause of the new topic sentence, or
2) the last sentence or clause of the previous paragraph.

The first option is more conventional and safer, since a transition at the end of a paragraph must both introduce a new topic and remain consistent with the old topic sentence.

N.B.: Sometimes the entire first sentence of the new paragraph serves as a transition, thus pushing the topic sentence to the position of the second sentence.

Common error
Do not use an “essay-plan” sentence as a paragraph transition (see the “bad” example), since such a sentence will not be able to indicate the direction to be developed by the new paragraph topic.

Examples

GOOD: Though the use of obsolete vocabulary in this text (topic of previous paragraph) may indicate an earlier era, the technological metaphors are contemporary if not futuristic (topic and direction of new paragraph).

BAD: I will now discuss the technological metaphors.

Exceptions

• Conventionally, you do not require a paragraph transition between the introduction and the first paragraph of the development, since the argument officially begins with the latter.

• You do, however, still need a paragraph transition from the last paragraph of the development into the conclusion.

ARGUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Argumentation in an essay can proceed in any number of ways, but in general you may opt for some form of associative development (e.g. the paragraphs serve as examples of the thesis itself or exemplify related aspects of the thesis) or a logically linear development (e.g. A > B > C > D) or
a combination of the two. In any case, break your thesis down into components, or steps, of the argument and devote one or more paragraphs to each step. Your argument will be more tightly organized if you know the relationship between each step in advance of the actual writing.

Suggestions for effective development

1) Indicate the logical or associative relation between two paragraphs in the paragraph transition.

2) Think of the argument as cumulative, so that the most important point is developed in the last paragraph(s) before the conclusion and the least important point begins the argument in the first paragraph(s) after the introduction.

3) Note that you may use the first paragraph(s) after the introduction as an “informational” paragraph where you present necessary background information in more detail than you were able to do in the introduction. This first developmental paragraph is a good place to put either an extended narrative summary or historical background, if either is necessary to the development of your thesis.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH(S)

Definition:
The conclusion serves one simple function, to round off the essay, and it can take numerous forms. The conclusion should never simply repeat the thesis, but should indicate that a development has taken place.

Possible forms

1) If the development of your argument has been dense and detailed, then summarize it. (The reader may not be able to remember the various details.) Note that a summary is not merely a repetition of points you have already mentioned. Instead, such a summary should emphasize the links between the individual steps in your argument and point out how they relate to the claim made in the thesis statement.

2) If the development of your argument has consisted of two or more separate strands (e.g. a comparison of texts or approaches), then pull the various strands together, evaluate them and draw a conclusion or conclusions from their juxtaposition.

3) If your argument has been completed by the end of the development (i.e. you don’t know what to conclude because you’ve already said “it”), then broaden your argument, that is, say something about the larger context of the thesis or provide a broader outlook. (N.B.: If you choose to broaden your argument, the conclusion must still be related to the thesis statement.)
4) Move to a metatextual level (i.e. reflect on your own contribution).

5) A change of register at the end of the conclusion can have great effect (e.g. move into a more poetic or philosophical tone); your final statement should resonate and stay with the reader.

6) Don’t end by stating what you didn’t do but could also have done (though this may be acceptable in some other subjects).

Common errors

• Do not summarize your argument if the points of the argument have already been made clearly. This is repetitive and bores your reader.

• Do not introduce a new detail of the argument in the conclusion.

• It is dangerous to end with a quotation because it tends to leave your reader hanging (quotations are rarely self-explanatory). Ideally, since this is your essay, you should end it in your own words.
CHAPTER THREE: SENTENCE ORGANIZATION

SENTENCE ENDINGS

In principle, place what you wish to stress at the end of the sentence. Logically, the emphasized point will be the new information introduced by the sentence. Apply the following techniques to make sure that sentences end with new information:

1) Delete unnecessary words at the end of a sentence, particularly those phrases which post-modify the emphasized point without adding anything new to it.

BAD: In the science-fiction novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Philip K. Dick blurs the boundary between human and machine by inventing androids who are indistinguishable from the humans but who are really machines.

GOOD: In the science-fiction novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Philip K. Dick blurs the boundary between human and machine by inventing androids who are indistinguishable from humans. (stressed point: “indistinguishable from humans”)

2) Move unimportant phrases, particularly time and place indicators, to the beginning of the sentence in order to leave what you want to emphasize at the end of the sentence.

BAD: The U.S. Supreme Court reopened the legal debate on abortion in the 1980s.

GOOD: In the 1980s, the U.S. Supreme Court reopened the legal debate on abortion. (stressed point: “legal debate on abortion”)

BAD: Hamlet seeks to revenge the murder of his father in Shakespeare’s best-known tragedy.

GOOD: In Shakespeare’s best-known tragedy, Hamlet seeks to revenge the murder of his father. (stressed point: “revenge the murder of his father”)

3) Occasionally you may have to separate a modifying phrase or relative clause from its referent in order to place what you wish to stress at the end of the sentence.

The protagonist of the novel comes from a lineage of distinguished ancestors which culminates in his father, the intimate advisor of the king. (“lineage” is separated from its relative pronoun “which”)

I arrived in London on a cold, rainy morning, where the dirty streets reflected the dull gray of the clouds. (“London” is separated from its relative pronoun “where”)

4) Note that participial phrases which modify the subject usually provide background information and therefore come at the beginning of the sentence. It is possible, however, to position such a phrase at the end of the sentence in order to stress its point. The two examples below have slightly different meanings:

MEANING NO.1: Ashamed as he was of not being able to find a date, he introduced his mother at the party as his girlfriend. (stressed point: “mother as his girlfriend”)
MEANING NO.2: He introduced his mother at the party as his girlfriend, ashamed as he was of not being able to find a date. (stressed point: “not able to find a date”)

COROLLARY TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SENTENCE ENDINGS

Avoid sentences which combine a very long subject phrase with a very short predicate. Very often such a sentence will end with the main verb in the passive form rather than with the important, new information. Rewrite such a sentence by changing the passive form to the active and shifting the verb to the earliest position it can occupy.

BAD: How the protagonist responds to his mother's lament after he has been expelled from yet another school and returns home with a triumphant expression on his face must next be investigated.

GOOD: We must next investigate how the protagonist responds to his mother's lament after he has been expelled from yet another school and returns home with a triumphant expression on his face.

N.B.: English sentence structure can happily consist of a short subject phrase and a long predicate, but not vice versa. Avoid writing “top-heavy” sentences.

SENTENCE TRANSITIONS

Make smooth sentence transitions by using either "consistent sentence topics" (model: AB/AC/AD) or the "anchor method" (model: AB/BC/CD) or, ideally, a combination of the two.

Consistent sentence topics

The topic of a sentence refers to the idea close to the beginning of a sentence which the rest of the sentence characterizes, expands, or elucidates. You can make smooth sentence transitions by using a sentence topic which is consistent (though NOT identical) with the topic of the previous sentence. We can schematize this as the AB/AC/AD model. Note in the "bad" example below that radically inconsistent sentence topics make for an unreadable paragraph.

Forms taken by the sentence topic (underlined in the examples):

1) the grammatical subject:
   Private home ownership is coming under threat as property prices soar beyond the private citizen's means.

2) the object of the verb shifted to the beginning of the sentence:
   A house for myself is what I want.

3) the subject of the introductory phrase:
   As for the house deposit, it is not clear that I could ever save enough money.

Examples

BAD: Finding the right lotions to keep the skin smooth is not all that is involved in maintaining youth and beauty. Larger social conditions inevitably affect one's concern with beauty. Personal investment or "natural"
aesthetics have little to do with the maintenance of beauty; rather, people's anxieties about social belonging are fed by the powerful commercial imperative that drives them. The beauty enterprises and multinationals who want to maximize their corporate profit influence personal lives invisibly but effectively in this manner. Needs are stimulated in the first place by the beauty industry, to which the customers of beauty products respond. Such effects hurt women in particular, not least because they are the direct targets of beauty advertising. Advertisements for cosmetics notoriously make them feel inadequate, and the money spent on the advertised products is a result of this feeling.

GOOD: Maintaining youth and beauty is more than just a question of finding the right lotions to keep the skin smooth. Inevitably, one's concern with beauty is caught up in larger social conditions. The maintenance of beauty has little to do with personal investment or "natural" aesthetics; rather, people are driven by a powerful commercial imperative designed to feed off of their anxieties about social belonging. In this manner, people's lives are influenced invisibly but effectively by the beauty enterprises and multinationals who want to maximize their corporate profit. The customers of beauty products in fact respond to needs that are stimulated by the beauty industry in the first place. Women in particular suffer from such effects, not least because they are the direct targets of beauty advertising. Notoriously, they are made to feel inadequate by advertisements for cosmetics, a feeling which is then turned into money spent on the advertised products.

Compare the sequences of topics in the above paragraphs:

**BAD example**
- Finding the right lotions to keep the skin smooth
- Larger social conditions
- Personal decisions or "natural" aesthetics
- People's anxieties about social belonging
- The beauty enterprises and multinationals
- Needs
- Such effects
- Advertisements
- The money

**GOOD example**
- Maintaining youth and beauty
- One's concern with beauty
- The maintenance of beauty
- People
- People's lives
- Customers of beauty products
- Women
- They

Note that in the "bad" list of sentence topics, there is no consistent progression formed by the sequence of topics, largely because each topic is a new piece of information. In the "good" list, on the other hand, new information appears at the end of each sentence and is connected together by a consistent, and even progressive, chain of sentence topics.

**The anchor method**

Given that a sentence begins with the sentence topic and ends with new information, you may use the new information of one sentence to set up the sentence topic of the next one. This will produce an AB/BC/CD model, where A in the first sentence is the sentence topic and B is the new information, then B in the second sentence is the sentence topic and C is the new information, then C in the third sentence is the sentence topic and D is the new information, etc.

**Example**

On December 28, 1895, Auguste and Louis Jean Lumière, the inventors of the cinematographic pick-up unit, presented the first silent film scenes in public. These scenes amazed as well as entertained spectators, who had seen nothing like these "magic lantern" images before. Shortly thereafter, spectators began to throng to
see the first narrative films, which quickly developed into a lucrative entertainment industry. This business flourished especially in the States, where former theater directors and producers made Hollywood the metropolis of film.

**Important note**

Using one or the other of these methods by itself will produce a coherent but extremely mechanical-sounding paragraph. The best solution is to integrate these two methods.
CHAPTER FOUR: PUNCTUATION

BASIC PUNCTUATION

A period/full stop separates complete sentences, which must consist at least of a subject and a predicate.

A semi-colon (;) separates independent clauses, i.e. clauses made up of subject plus predicate which are not preceded by subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns. A semi-colon indicates a closer relation between two independent clauses than a period/full stop does, but a stronger division than a coordinating conjunction. (Think of the semicolon as the replacement of either a period or a conjunction.)

I found no reason not to believe him; he had always been straightforward with me.

A colon (:) is shorthand for “for instance,” “to illustrate,” “that is,” etc. A colon in English is most commonly followed by a list of nouns or parallel phrases. Colons should never follow the main verb of a sentence, and, in British English, should never be followed by a capital letter. Avoid the German-language colon, which is used to separate complete sentences (in English, you must either write out the logical relation between complete sentences rather than using a colon, or separate them with a semi-colon).

Growing up in the bad part of town, he had learned to do at least three things: fight, drink, and play a mean game of poker.

Parentheses (or brackets) indicate an additional commentary which provides elaboration or secondary information. Parentheses often contain examples, preceded by “e.g.” or “for ex.” The material within parentheses may be a sentence fragment or a complete sentence.

The first draft of an essay will require not just correction (fixing mistakes), but also revision (rewriting according to argumentational and structural needs).

Dashes indicate an interruption to the main idea of a sentence or an emphasized afterthought. (Think of the dash as the most extreme form of the comma.) Two dashes on either side of a phrase or clause set off an interruption placed within a sentence, while a dash before a final phrase or clause in the sentence serves to add extra emphasis. Use such a device sparingly, since too much interruption or too much emphasis can quickly become tiresome for your reader.

I arrived in the city with an abundance of good will -- not that this was unusual for me. (The font “Courier” does not distinguish between hyphen and dash. Therefore, you should use two hyphens.)

With many fonts, there is a difference between a hyphen (-) and a dash (En dash —, Em dash ——). A hyphen is used for compound words or separation across line breaks (e.g. “up-to-date”) – and not for afterthoughts or interruptions.

There are two ways of inserting dashes. If you use the En dash, it is preceded and followed by a space. If you use the Em dash, then there are no spaces.
Punctuating quotation marks

British orthography places all punctuation outside the quotation marks (unless the question mark or exclamation point is part of the quotation itself). American orthography places the comma and period/full stop inside the quotation marks, and the semi-colon and colon outside. The question mark and exclamation point are placed outside the quotation marks if they belong to the sentence, and inside if they belong to the quotation.

The Study Guide uses American punctuation and spelling, to remain consistent with the MLA style.

Punctuating titles

Titles of monographs (i.e. books or treatises published separately) must be italicized; they have no quotations marks. This holds for all print and visual texts which appear in the world as separate units, i.e. film titles, CD titles, video titles, etc.

Titles of articles and short stories must be placed between quotation marks and are not italicized. This holds for all print and visual texts which appear in the world as parts of a larger published unit, i.e. poem titles, song titles, TV shows, etc. (except if they were originally published as a separate unit and now appear in an anthology; see “Chapter Fourteen: Bibliography”).

Common error

Avoid incomplete sentences, i.e. sentences without an independent subject or verb. The most unreadable form of the incomplete sentence in English is an unanchored relative or adverbial clause:

Which brings Hamlet to the point of despair.

Repressing instead of facing the conditions of his despair.

RULES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR USING COMMAS

1. General rules

1) Do not place a comma between the subject and verb or between the verb and object if one follows the other without interruption.

WRONG: What is particularly important in this passage, is the attention devoted by the narrator to the protagonist's suffering. (“What is particularly important in this passage” is a subject phrase; therefore, no comma follows it before the verb.)

2) Do not separate two independent clauses with a comma. Two independent clauses, no matter how complex their structure, must be separated by a semi-colon or period/full stop, or connected by a conjunction.

WRONG: He went home, I stayed there.

RIGHT: He went home; I stayed there.
3) Do not place a comma before *that*, whether it is used as a relative pronoun (e.g "He has not yet found the road that leads to happiness") or as a conjunction (e.g "I have forgotten that I ever promised you anything").

4) Do not place a comma before *where, when, who, how, or why clauses* which serve as the object of the verb.

   **WRONG:** Don't ask me, where he is. / He did not tell his mother, when he would arrive. (Both “where he is” and “when he would arrive” are direct object clauses and are therefore not preceded by a comma.)

5) Use commas around *relative clauses* if – and only if – they are non-defining, also known as non-restrictive, clauses. A “defining clause” contains information necessary to the meaning of the modified noun, while a “non-defining clause” contains information incidental to the meaning of the modified noun.

   **NON-DEFINING CLAUSE:** He did well in the competition, which was sponsored by a whiskey distillery. (The relative clause provides incidental information about “the competition,” so it needs to be set off by a comma.)

   **DEFINING CLAUSE:** Though he performed badly on Wednesday, he did well in the competition which took place on Friday. (The relative clause provides defining information that answers the question “which competition?”, so it is not set off by a comma.)

   **Test for the defining/non-defining clause rule:** If you can leave the clause out without changing the meaning of the sentence, then use commas. If leaving the clause out changes the meaning of the sentence, then do not use commas.

### 2. Strong suggestions

#### Using commas with conjunctions

1) In general, place a comma between independent clauses connected by coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, yet, for, so, or, nor*), especially in the following cases:

   - if the independent clauses have different subjects:
     
     Jim found a hiding place for his letters, yet Jane came across them the next day.

   - if the independent clauses are quite long:
     
     We never go to the countryside without being enthralled by the pureness of air, and we never arrive back in the city without feeling poisoned.

2) By extension, you do not need to use a comma before the coordinating conjunction in the following cases:

   - if the two independent clauses have the same subject:
     
     She went for a walk and found a stray dog.

   - if the two independent clauses are short (as is also true of the above example):
I bought the bread and my friend bought the cheese.

- if the sentence involves a compound predicate (i.e. multiple verbs with one subject):
  
  He huffed and puffed and blew the house down.

**Rule of thumb:** The longer the clauses (especially the clause which precedes the conjunction), the more you need to use a comma before the conjunction. Note, however, that commas before *and*, *or* and *nor* are always optional.

3) Do not place a comma after a conjunction, unless it is followed by a phrase which interrupts the clause as a whole:

RIGHT: But I didn't know you then.

WRONG: But, I didn't know you then.

RIGHT: I had only seen you across the room, but, despite not knowing you then, I already liked you.

4) In general, place a comma between independent and dependent clauses when the dependent clause begins with a subordinate conjunction (e.g. *if*, *although*, *while*, *since*, *as*, *whereas*, etc.).

Do not use a comma before a dependent clause beginning with *because* unless the clause deserves special emphasis.

**Using commas with adverbial phrases**

1) In general, place a comma after an introductory adverb or transitional phrase which begins a sentence (however, nevertheless, on the one hand, on the other hand, as a result, instead, indeed, in fact, consequently, moreover, furthermore, also, fortunately, etc.):

Nevertheless, the motion passed in parliament.

- Place commas before and after a transitional adverb if it falls within the sentence:
  
  I didn't like the look of him, moreover, so I just closed the door.

- Commas after the transitional adverbs *thus* and *therefore* at the beginning of a sentence are optional. Setting *thus* and *therefore* off with a comma makes them more emphatic.
  
  Thus the reader is made to feel uncomfortable.
  
  Thus, the reader is made to feel uncomfortable.

- Commas around *therefore* when it falls within the sentence are optional, but *thus* is never set off by commas in the middle of a sentence:
  
  The reader, therefore, is made to feel uncomfortable. The reader is thus made to feel uncomfortable.
2) In general, place commas after introductory adverbial clauses and introductory participial phrases:

As I walk to work, I find myself humming the tunes of songs I hate.

Walking to work, I find myself humming the tunes of songs I hate.

Depressed by the death of his dog, he decided to quit his job as a veterinarian.

- The comma is especially necessary if the introductory adverbial clause or phrase is long:

    Considering the intricacy of my financial affairs and the fact that I couldn't afford a battle with the income tax bureau, I decided to hire a professional accountant.

- The comma is also especially necessary if the separation between the introductory clause and the independent clause is not clear:

    As the day warms up, the tarmac begins to melt. (Without a comma, “the tarmac” may appear to be the object of “warms up,” as in “As the day warms up the tarmac.”)

3) When an adverbial clause or participial phrase ends the sentence, use the “defining vs. non-defining” rule to decide whether the clause or phrase should be preceded with a comma. (Note that this suggestion qualifies point no. 4 above).

I find myself humming songs as I walk to work. (“as I walk to work” defines when I hum songs = no comma)

He found me on the road, walking to work. (“walking to work” provides additional information = comma)

I picked up the heavy bag using only one hand. (“using only one hand” is necessary to the meaning = no comma)

The same holds true for adverbial clauses of time and place (e.g. when and where):

I went to London last week, where I have been many times before. (incidental information = comma)

I went to London last week, when my daughter was staying with her grandparents. (incidental information = comma)

I went to London when I had finally saved the money for the trip. (defining information = no comma)
**Interruptions within a sentence**

1) Set off modifying phrases or clauses within a sentence with commas in the following cases:

- if the interruption separates the subject and verb:
  
  He, unlike the rest of his party, had never heard of the band they were going to hear.

- if the interruption is a non-defining relative clause (see “General Rules,” no. 5).

**N.B.:** An interrupting phrase or clause must be set off by commas on both sides of the phrase or clause. Make sure that you always use commas in parallel, unless the phrase or clause in question begins or ends the sentence. **However is always preceded and followed by a comma** (except at the beginning of a sentence, where it cannot, of course, be preceded by a comma).

2) Set off an interruption within a sentence with **dashes** in the following cases:

- if it radically interrupts the sentence:
  
  I didn’t go all that way - and I went a very long way – just for the fun of it.

- if the interruption itself includes commas:
  
  All the nations of Central Europe – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia – have at some point been in the middle of East-West battles.

**Commas in a series**

1) Use commas to separate at least the first two elements in a series of three or more words or phrases:

   This will require money, time, and effort.

   I have not seen him looking so well, acting so confidently, or smiling so much in a long time.

   The comma between the next-to-last and last elements in a series ending with “and” is optional:

   This will require money, time(,), and effort.

2) Use commas to separate coordinate adjectives (i.e adjectives which each individually modify the noun):

   cold, dark, muddy waters (= cold waters, dark waters, muddy waters)

   **Do not use commas to separate cumulative adjectives** (i.e adjectives which modify the entire adjective-noun phrase in front of them):

   severe economic difficulties ("severe" modifies "economic difficulties"; the meaning is not "severe difficulties, economic difficulties")
CHAPTER FIVE: GRADING SHEET

The following five subsections will each contribute to the overall grade for your critical essay. Individual instructors may choose to grade each subsection separately and calculate the overall grade as a weighted average of the grades for the subsections.

• **Formal aspects**

  Includes layout (correct title page, no table of contents, first lines of paragraphs indented, page numbers); format of quotations; format of references in the text (MLA style) as well as footnotes; accuracy, consistency and completeness of the bibliography.

• **Language**

  Punctuation and spelling? Idiomatic language (no Germanisms, correct use of vocabulary etc.)? Appropriate range of vocabulary? Academic style? Correct grammar?

• **Essay structure**

  Is there an introduction with an interest awakener? Does the introduction prepare the reader for the thesis statement (i.e. are all important components of the thesis statement introduced properly)? Is the thesis statement arguable (i.e. an intelligible claim, but not obviously the case), and does it have both a focus and a direction? Does it fit the argument (i.e. does it guide the presentation of evidence and sum up the most important claims/findings)?

  Does each paragraph in the main part of the essay (between introduction and conclusion) contain a topic sentence that is arguable and has both a focus and a direction? Does each paragraph constitute one basic step in the argument? Are there clear links between the individual paragraphs? Is the argument structured economically, i.e. are there no repetitive passages?

  Is the conclusion more than just a summary (i.e. does it also point out how the main arguments are related, broaden the scope of the argument, and evaluate the findings in relation to the text(s) read and the criticism available)?

• **Quality and extent of criticism considered**

  Is the number of secondary texts adequate for the type of paper? Are there only very general texts, or also more specialized/specific ones? Are the secondary texts useful in the context of the argument? Are there additional types/schools of criticism that should have been considered because the argument raises questions typically addressed by these types/schools of criticism? Is any of the material discussed in the
course used in the paper?

- **Argument logic and content**

  Is the essay argumentative (rather than descriptive)? Are the claims supported by pertinent examples from the primary text(s)? Is the argument intersubjective (i.e. NOT dependent on an author’s entirely personal impressions)?

  Is the reading of the primary text(s) correct and appropriate (e.g. adequate paraphrases, correct presentation of the plot/content, relevant aspects discussed)? Does the author provide enough information about the primary text(s) to ensure that readers who are do not know the text(s) very well would still be able to follow the argument?

  Are the secondary sources discussed critically, and are they used to further the argument (and NOT to replace it)? Are literary and critical terms defined and used appropriately? Does the discussion of secondary literature reveal an awareness of a theoretical approach/theoretical approaches (i.e. does it outline and situate itself within a scholarly debate)?

  Is the argument coherent (both individual parts and overall)? Are there any original observations/ideas? Does it become clear why it is interesting and/or useful to read the primary text(s) in the way that is suggested in the essay (i.e. does the author explicitly and critically reflect on what is gained by his or her approach)?
PART II
PRESENTATIONS
CHAPTER SIX: PREPARING A PRESENTATION

Presentations give you an opportunity to practice two important skills: to communicate information orally in such a way that it is accessible and convincing to your audience, and to make a confident and competent impression even when you speak in English (which is not a native language for most students). To achieve these aims, you need to plan presentations just as carefully as your papers. The following suggestions will give you an idea of what is expected from both individual and group presentations. Some of the recommendations will sound familiar to you, as many basic considerations that are important for writing critical essays are also crucial when you prepare oral presentations (most importantly, there must be a thesis). However, you should be aware that oral presentations differ from written papers in certain ways.

Note: Just as with critical essays, you must include full bibliographical information in your presentations (see “Source Acknowledgment”).

Establishing the content

1) Concentrate on the essentials, i.e. select and make choices. One or two convincing arguments are worth more than a series of unconnected observations or remarks.

2) Do not give a summary of the author’s biography unless it is truly necessary for your argument.

3) If you refer to literary texts in your presentation, indicate passages that support your argument (e.g. quotations). In other words, provide examples with exact references.

4) Incorporate relevant secondary literature in your presentation (including references and critical discussion).

5) Structure your argument logically in such a way that the audience can follow you through your argument (see below). Whereas repetition quickly becomes annoying in written papers, a certain amount of redundancy will help your audience to follow an oral presentation.

6) Think about the type of audience and design your talk towards your particular audience. (Who are they? What do they expect? What level of knowledge can you expect from them? Can you include elements that make it easier for the audience to relate to your topic, e.g. short anecdotes, shared knowledge, or visualizations?)

7) Make sure you understand all the concepts and terms you use in your presentation (whether orally or on slides and handouts). Look up things you do not know (meaning and pronunciation).

8) Include ideas and observations of your own in the presentation. If you only recount what others have thought about your topic, i.e. if there is no sense that you have an opinion of your own about the topic in question, then the presentation will be much less interesting – and thus less convincing – for your audience.

9) Contact your instructor in due time (at least two weeks before the presentation takes place) in order to discuss your plans.
CHAPTER SEVEN: STRUCTURING YOUR PRESENTATION

It is important that you structure your presentation clearly and logically, and that at least the basic components of this structure are transparent to your audience (i.e. the audience must know whether you are still introducing the topic or already engaging in critical discussion). The following steps outline one effective way of structuring presentation of ten minutes or more. (For shorter presentations, such an intricate and detailed structure is inappropriate, since most of the available time would be used for purely formal information.)

1) Welcome

Opening your presentation with a short welcoming remark is not only a matter of politeness, but will also give your audience time to adjust to your manner of speaking (e.g. pitch, rhythm, and pace).

2) Introduction: Disclaimer, Aims, and Thesis Statement

Tell the audience what you are talking about, and why this topic is relevant (in general, and particularly to the audience in question). For this reason, your presentations should always have a title, and you should give the audience a short outline of the structure of your presentation. Also, tell your audience whether you will answer questions in the course of the presentation (not advisable for talks that are shorter than ten minutes).

In general, presentations should be **argumentative rather than purely descriptive**. Therefore, as is the case with critical essays, your introduction should include a thesis statement that you go on to prove in the main part of the presentation. (For more information see "Chapter Two: Essay Structure.")

3) Main Part

This part of your presentation contains the main points of your argument as well as evidence to support it. Make sure that you define any specialized terms your audience may not know. Also, try to chunk your talk into recognizable subsections that a) circle around one central topic, b) add one main point to your argument, and c) are connected to the preceding and the following subsection of your talk.

4) Conclusion 1: Preliminary Summary and Ideas for Discussion

Your conclusion should be short and to the point. Do not repeat whole sections of the argument, but sum up the main finding(s). If possible, suggest some questions that arise from your presentation. In any case, end your presentation with a definite closure statement (e.g. “Thank you for your attention. Are there any questions?”).
5) Question Time and Discussion

Check whether the time frame for your presentation includes question time and discussion, or whether you will be allowed some extra-time for this section. Also, find out whether you yourself are supposed to lead the discussion, or whether your instructor will take over.

6) Conclusion 2: Summary, Closing Remarks

If you are expected to lead the discussion that follows the main part of your presentation, you should also prepare a way of closing it. (Sometimes, this means cutting it off.) Ideally, this second conclusion includes a summary that reflects the additional insights gained from the discussion as well as a closing remark (e.g. “Thank you once again for your attention as well as for the lively discussion.”)

If your presentation is longer than 20 minutes, we strongly recommend that you include an interactive element in your presentation. (Note, however, that it is difficult to gauge in advance long an interactive element takes, and bear this in mind when you plan the timing of your presentation.)

Also, remember that the structure of a presentation is there to support the content of your argument, and not to replace it. A presentation that is flawless from the point of view of structure is boring if you do not include original ideas and present these ideas in a lively fashion. Therefore, think of a presentation as a performance in which it is your job to keep the audience enthralled.
CHAPTER EIGHT: PRACTICING THE PRESENTATION

1) Practice the talk in advance (i.e. go through the entire presentation at least twice). Make sure that a) you do not use significantly less time than you are allowed to, and b) that you never exceed the time limit; the former would create the impression that you did not make enough of an effort, and the latter would be unfair towards both the other students and the instructor, who would suffer the consequences of the delay that you caused.

2) Speak freely from carefully prepared notes (e.g. mind maps, list with key words) or use a set of flash cards. Do not simply read off a written text or the slides of a PowerPoint presentation.

3) Try to make eye contact with your audience, and do not talk when you have your back turned towards the audience (i.e. when you write on the blackboard).

4) Use the overhead projector, the blackboard, PowerPoint presentations or another medium to give visual support to your presentation (important terms, pictures, quotations).

5) Always use large font sizes on transparencies and PowerPoint slides (e.g. for Times New Roman: 20 point or larger), otherwise the text is not legible and therefore useless.

6) Do not put too much information on one slide, and remember that the visuals should support your argument, not distract from it. Extended passages from a primary or secondary text as well as very detailed tables and diagrams should not be presented (solely) on slides, but rather be distributed as a handout (provided that such detailed information is truly necessary – if not, then simplify it or leave it out).

7) Check out the room in which your presentation will take place. (What kind of equipment is available? How does the equipment work? Is there a table where you can put your notes, or do you have to organize one? How much time will handling the equipment take?)

8) Check your slides and handouts for spelling and grammar mistakes. A good idea is to show them to a fellow student and ask him or her to correct them for you.

9) Prepare at least one handout with the title, topic, and key concepts of your presentation, information about the setting (course title, instructor, date, your own names) and a bibliography of the texts you used and/or quoted (just as you would in a critical essay. Make sure there are enough copies, and that the number of handouts is in proportion to the length of your presentation. (15 pages for a five-minute presentation is clearly too much; conversely, half a page for a presentation of 45 minutes is very meager.)
10) Remember that you can set tasks or distribute information concerning your presentation prior to the actual presentation (e.g. one week before the presentation). This is an elegant way to ensure that all the members of your audience have the same basis of knowledge, and that they have already thought about the topic of your presentation in advance.

11) Do not worry if you are nervous before a presentation. Remember that being nervous means that your body is on the alert, and that this added attentiveness will help you to give your best in the course of your presentation.

If you prepare your presentations in the spirit of these recommendations, then your ability to communicate orally will improve because the manner of presentation will make it easier for the audience to follow. Moreover, preparing your presentation carefully will help you gain the confidence necessary to convince the members of your audience.
PART III

RESEARCH AND SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGMENT
CHAPTER NINE: RESEARCH

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

Modern literary studies generally distinguish between primary and secondary sources. In the context of an academic essay, the label primary source refers to the literary text that is the focus of attention. In other words, primary sources are texts that your essay aims to investigate. Secondary sources are all the texts that you draw on in your analysis of the primary source. In other words, secondary sources deal, directly or indirectly, with either the primary source or with the larger argument that you make in your essay.

While it is crucial that you come up with your own thesis and develop your own argumentation when you interpret a primary source, it is also very important that you familiarize yourself with existing secondary sources on the text and topic of your choice. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, secondary sources provide you with information that increases your familiarity with a given primary text: When was it written? Who wrote it? How and where was it published? What is its genre and its structure? What editions exist of it? What do others think of a particular passage? What do others think of the text as a whole? Secondly, a familiarity with secondary sources helps you contextualize your own argument, to put it into relation with what other scholars have already claimed about the primary source you investigate. Literary studies, and thus your own essay, do not exist in a void. It happens rarely, if at all, that a chosen primary text has not already been investigated in some scholarly form. Very often, the literary text you have chosen will possess a long and extensive critical history. While the multitude of essays, monographs, commentaries and articles on a given primary text can seem overwhelming at first, it is important that you gain some form of overview over existing research, not only to know what has already been said and done, but to situate your own argument in relation to it: your essay must make use of secondary sources in order to show how it reflects, revises, or refutes what the larger academic community has already claimed about a given literary text. In some instances, this may seem like a daunting task, for example, if you plan to write about a famous literary text like Hamlet. However, even in such cases, there are helpful tools like critical overviews or bibliographies which help you familiarize yourself with the critical history of a given text.

REFERENCING AND THE DANGERS OF PLAGIARISM

A familiarity with secondary sources on the text and topic of your choice will not only further your understanding of a text and lead you to embed your own argument in an already existing discourse, but it will also provide you with useful critical tools for your own approach, help you flesh out your own claim and argumentative basis, and maybe even inspire you with new ideas and ways of looking at texts. As such, you should always try to invest at least as much time into consulting secondary sources, as you do in analyzing and thinking about a primary text. Since secondary sources will have such an important influence on your essay, it is vital that you reference them.

In an academic essay, every thought, idea or argument that is not your own, i.e. that you derive from what you have read, needs to be referenced. This means that your essay needs to formally mark such instances in order for the reader to realize that s/he is reading (about) someone
else’s ideas, either by directly quoting from the source or by paraphrasing it. For the formal guidelines of putting references in an academic essay, see chapter eleven. Should you quote, copy or paraphrase what you have read without providing adequate references, you commit plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Consequences range from course failure to legal disciplinary action. In order to avoid committing plagiarism, make sure that you always remain conscious of the degree to which your own argument is indebted to or based on the thoughts of others. A good way of doing this is to keep a list of all the secondary sources you have consulted as well as to make summaries and take excerpts of their main arguments in order to become more aware of how and where others’ ideas have influenced your own. It goes without saying that you should never attempt to pass off something you have found on the internet as your own work. The university runs all essays through a plagiarism detection software that easily spots such cases. For more detailed information on plagiarism, see chapter ten.

AVAILABILITY AND RELIABILITY

It is crucial that you always critically reflect on the reliability of the secondary sources you are consulting and referencing. Reliability refers to the degree to which a secondary source is providing accurate, well-researched, well-referenced and academically sound research. Secondary sources that are readily available (for example, on the internet) may not be the most reliable, and vice versa.

When consulting secondary sources, always check the date of publication. While it is perfectly fine to reference a secondary source that is quite old (for example from the 1970s), it is important to keep in mind that literary studies has changed considerably since then. As such, you need to make sure that you give enough reasons for why you consider this particular source as still being up-to-date. When reading up on secondary sources on a given primary text or argument, it is often best to start with the most recent sources. Often, they will include some form of discussion of earlier works, and this in turn will provide you with helpful hints on how far you may need to venture into critical history in order to situate your own argument.

Primary sources, too, can be judged based on their reliability. With the exception of texts published in the second half of the twentieth century, it is highly unlikely that you will read a primary source in its original form of publication. Most primary sources nowadays are only available in edited form and published by modern-day presses. This has furthering as well as hindering effects on a primary text’s reliability. One the one hand, good modern-day editions include information that aid the reader in understanding a text’s historical influences and allusions. In other words, modern editions often elucidate the primary text in a way that a mere facsimile publication of its original form never could. In addition, some texts, such as Shakespeare’s plays, were never published in any authoritative edition during its author’s lifetime, and as such, an editor is needed to establish a reliable version of its original form. On the other hand, an editorial hand always constitutes a form of interference: it presents a primary text in a certain fashion and thereby steers the modern reader’s perception of it in a way that the original text might not have done. As such, it is important that you always check who a text’s editor is, as well as whether s/he has credentials that indicate reliability: for example, whether s/he has written other academic publications on the text, or whether s/he has acted as editor of other works by the same author or of the same period. Reliable editions of primary texts also include some form of commentary on the editorial practice. Notes on the form and range of the editor’s hand provides transparency and thereby fosters reliability. One of the best examples of reliable primary editions are the Arden editions of Shakespeare’s plays.
Their extensive editorial apparatus not only provides helpful commentaries, it also notes exactly where and how editors have altered the original text(s).

In order to make your encounter with secondary sources easier, the following is a short list of the three most common channels of availability, as well as a note on what to look out for in terms of their reliability.

**Monographs:** Printed books are generally very reliable since most book publishers invest resources into editing and peer-reviewing the works they choose to publish. Good examples are the presses of well-known universities. Exceptions are books printed by low-prestige academic publishers as well as self-published works. If you are in doubt concerning a book’s credibility, it is best to look up the publisher on the internet, and to check whether they conduct peer-review (i.e. have publications reviewed by external experts). As a general rule, peer-reviewed sources are much more reliable than non-peer-reviewed ones. Another good way to come to terms with the reliability of an individual book is to check academic reviews in journals.

**Articles or essays** (in journals and essay collections): Articles and essays are less extensive but also more focused than monographs. In addition, most of them present a short summary of existing secondary sources on a given text or topic, which can help you in gaining an overview over available research. As articles and essays are more numerous than monographs, however, you need to pay extra attention to the reliability of what you read. Generally, the same cautionary rule as with monographs applies. Journals published by well-known publishers, as well as those that use peer-review, are much more reliable than those that are published by obscure presses or publish without peer-reviewing. Checking the website of a journal/publisher is generally the best way of establishing its soundness.

**Online sources:** Ever since the rise of the internet, online sources have become much more prominent in academic research. When using secondary sources from the internet, it is important to make a distinction between digital versions of published sources (on websites like Project Muse or JStore) and sources that are published only on the internet. With respect to the former, the same criteria as with printed sources apply, and you can usually cite them in the same way as the printed original. In the latter case, it is crucial that you gain an overview over where the source comes from: Who wrote it? Who is in charge of the website? Is the content edited or peer-reviewed? If you find no information on these questions, the source is not reliable. For example, Wikipedia may provide helpful introductory information, but since it is written largely anonymously, and neither edited nor reviewed by someone holding this official function, it is prone to containing errors and inaccuracies. This is why Wikipedia is not acceptable as a reliable secondary source in an academic essay. The same is true of websites such as SparkNotes, Cliffsnotes or Gradesaver. A good example of a reliable online-only source is Romantic Textualities (www.romtext.org.uk). If you check the website you can see that it provides information about its individual authors and their affiliation, its editorial and advisory board, as well as its editing and reviewing practices. Such references are crucial in establishing a website’s reliability.

A note on Google Books: Google Books contains an immense amount of scanned or digitized versions of published sources. However, most newer books published on Google Books are only partially available. As such, Google Books is generally not a reliable online source to reference in your essay. If you want to make use of a source found on Google Books, always go to the original published version (and establish the reliability of the original). However, many rare old
books are available on Google Books in their entirety and can be downloaded as PDF files; again, you can cite them in the same way as the printed originals.

**SOME DOS AND DON’TS OF RESEARCH**

**Do:**
- Check the Textual Analysis Bibliography for a list of helpful secondary sources that will facilitate your approach to a chosen topic (handbooks, companions, anthologies, literary histories).
- Use library catalogues as well as online databases (such as the MLA International Bibliography or the Rechercheportal) to find reliable and pertinent secondary sources for your chosen text/topic.
- Attend library tours, research workshops or individual research consultation hours offered by the Zentralbibliothek Zürich (check website for details) and the library of the English Department.
- Discuss research strategies/findings with other students. Help each other determine the reliability of secondary as well as primary sources.
- Use reliable dictionaries, such as the OED, when referencing meanings of words.

**Don’t:**
- Never simply google the title of a text, name of an author, or name of a topic. Such a search will find you highly unreliable secondary sources.
- Never base your argument on information provided by secondary sources with questionable reliability. Never quote or paraphrase from unreliable sources.
- Don’t commit plagiarism. Always reference the secondary sources you are using. Never pass off someone else’s work as your own.
- Never merely rely on the first couple of secondary sources you find (especially if they are older than ten or twenty years). Do a thorough research of existing secondary sources, and work with the ones that are most relevant to your argument.

**USEFUL WEBSITES**

**Rechercheportal:** www.recherche-portal.ch (catalogue for all Swiss university libraries)

**MLA International Bibliography:** www.mla.org/bibliography (the most important database for English literature)

**Literature Online:** literature.proquest.com (a meta-database combining several literature databases and resources)

**Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek:** http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit (you can use this index to search for journals and find out whether you have access to them via the ZB, whether they are open access, etc.)
**OED online**: www.oed.com (the authoritative online English dictionary)

**Internet Archive**: www.archive.org (digital library of free e-books, especially old books that you may not be able to find in print)

**Project Gutenberg**: www.gutenberg.org (digital library of free e-books)

**Google Books** also has a large online library of rare old books that can be freely downloaded in PDF format.
CHAPTER TEN: PLAGIARISM

Every time you use somebody else’s ideas, language, or key concepts, you have to acknowledge the source of your borrowings. If you fail to identify those borrowings, you are committing plagiarism. Plagiarism is dishonest, intellectually impoverishing, and unfair, so don’t do it.

THREE DIFFERENT KINDS OF BORROWING

1) **Word-for-word quotation.** If you copy the exact words, phrases, or sentences from a source, make sure to use quotation marks at the beginning and the end of the borrowed passage and indicate the source of the borrowing by indicating the author and page number in parenthesis at the end of the quote.

   **Example 1:** "Naipaul's affection for the values of the English bourgeoisie in their imperial prime is expressive of an only half-concealed colonial nostalgia" (Nixon 36).

   **Example 2:** "And for the first time in my life I was one of the crowd. There was notion in my appearance or dress to distinguish me from the crowd eternally hurrying into Churchgate Station" (Naipaul 43).

2) **Paraphrase.** If you use your own words to summarize or otherwise render the ideas of a secondary source, you must indicate the source by naming the author and page number in parenthesis. Avoid close paraphrase because you are treading on thin ice: "It is trickier to define plagiarism when you summarize and paraphrase. They are not the same, but they blend so seamlessly that you may not even be aware when you are drifting from summary into paraphrase, then across the line into plagiarism" (Booth, Colomb, and Williams 169).

   **Example:** Terry Eagleton's tirade against structuralism is tempered by the admission that this school of thought at least alerted readers and critics to the fact that any manifestation of language, including literature, was constructed, that its meaning was neither determined by individual experience nor resided in a god-given order of immanence (106-7).

3) **Borrowing of ideas.** If you use somebody else's ideas and key concepts, you have to credit the source. For instance, if you refer to the idea that something very basic changed in human society around the time of 1910, you have to indicate that this notion derives from Virginia Woolf.¹

   **Example:** Revolutionary art does not go unnoticed by the public, and one could agree with Virginia Woolf, who said in "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" that the character of humanity changed in a basic way around 1910 (320) because it was at exactly that time that the first exhibition of post impressionistic art was held in London.

¹ Virginia Woolf: "And now I will hazard a second assertion, which is more disputable perhaps, to the effect that in or about December 1910, human character changed" (320).
PLAGIARISM AND THE INTERNET

While the Internet is a perfectly legitimate place to go looking for critical sources, you must not treat borrowings derived from the net in any way differently from borrowings taken from printed sources. Therefore, do not plagiarize from the Internet either. Do not give in to the temptation to download whole essays from the net and claim them to be your own. Always acknowledge each and every borrowing of language other than your own by putting the sentence(s) or phrase(s) in quotation marks and by identifying the author in brackets (see Chapter Ten: “Quotations” below).

SPOTTING AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

All student papers are routinely checked with and archived by a special plagiarizing application. In addition, instructors are very good at recognizing and spotting plagiarized sentences, passages and ideas. In other words, if you commit plagiarism, you will most likely not get away with it. Those who try it are regularly caught and may have to repeat the respective course. At the very least, their papers are rejected or severely downgraded; in severe cases legal disciplinary action and expulsion from the university can result. How to avoid plagiarism:

• Be confident! Your own ideas are better than what others have written. You can write a terrific paper.

• Do not google your subject of investigation (e.g. poem). If you read a great amount of text on the Internet, you might not remember the websites and mistake their ideas (or phrasing) for your own.

• Take notes when you read a text and mark very carefully which parts of your notes are direct quotations.

• Always write down page numbers when doing research.

• Begin early enough with your paper to avoid time pressure.

• Be informed. Ask your peers or your instructor if you have doubts about plagiarism.

Please note that you are required to sign and hand in a Selbständigkeitserklärung for every paper you write. Once you are committed to source acknowledgment, you have to do so in a particular way. Please follow the conventions outlined in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. (Some instructors may allow you to use other conventions as well, but MLA style will always be accepted.) What follows is a summary of the most important conventions of quotation and source acknowledgment.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: QUOTATIONS

Quotations serve the purpose of illustrating, supporting, or contrasting your argument. Make sure to embed them well in your own prose. Don't let the external sources take away from you the leading role in writing the paper, otherwise your writing is of little originality. The amount of quotations compared to your own prose should not exceed 10-15%. Also, note that most quotations are not self-explanatory. You must both introduce a quote with a contextualizing lead-in and comment on it with a follow-up. Otherwise, you reader will struggle to understand why the quotation is important for your argument.

1. DIRECT QUOTATION

Every direct quotation must be rendered exactly as it stands in the book, journal, newspaper, interview, etc. from which it was extracted. You must therefore reproduce punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc. exactly as you find it in the original source. Any changes you make in the borrowed text must be marked in your paper by using square brackets [ ]. You may add a note saying “my emphasis” (see 1.2) if you want to stress a word or a sentence by putting it in italics even though the original source does not have it italicized.

**Making changes:** “That structuralism has in some ways become complicit with the aims and procedures of [late capitalist] society is obvious enough in the reception it has received in England” (Eagleton 122). *(The original reads "such" instead of "late capitalist").*

**Adding emphasis:** “These relations, Levi-Strauss considered, were inherent in the human mind itself, so that in studying a body of myth we are looking less at its narrative contents than at the universal mental operations which structure it” (Eagleton 104, my emphasis).

If your quotation does not exceed four lines, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it directly in your text.

2. BLOCK QUOTE

In prose, if the quotation runs more than three lines, you must present it as a block quotation. Block quotations are indented from the left-hand margin and do not have quotation marks. In addition you should choose at least one of the following methods of separating the block quote from your own text: a) reduce the spacing between the lines, b) reduce the font size, c) indent from the right-hand (and, if you want, from the left-hand) margin, and/or d) add an extra line between the text and block quote before and after the quote.

Terry Eagleton’s view of structuralism is inspired by his commitment to Marxist literary theory. He can not sympathize with an analytical procedure that brackets out the actual conditions of literary production and consumption:
Structuralism and phenomenology, dissimilar though they are in central ways, both spring from the ironic act of shutting out the material world in order the better to illuminate our consciousness of it. For anyone who believes that consciousness is in an important sense practical, inseparably bound up with the ways we act in and on reality, any such move is bound to be self-defeating. It is rather like killing a person in order to examine more conveniently the circulation of the blood. (109)

Eagleton's metaphors are telling; he considers the structuralist approach a destruction of the vital texture of consciousness rendered in literary works.

3. QUOTING VERSE

If you quote poetry in your essay, you must always indicate the line breaks, either by inserting a slash (/) between the verses and leaving a space on either side of the slash, or, if you quote more than two lines, by using a block quote. In the parentheses you should indicate the Book, Canto or other subdivision (if applicable) by a capital Roman numeral, followed by the verse numbers in Arabic letters. Write the author's last name in the parentheses only if it is not obvious from your discussion who wrote the quoted poetry.

In saying that “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven” (I, 254-55), Satan voices an idea that harmonizes with the individualist ethos of Protestantism.

When using the block quote, start a partial first line where it begins in the original, i.e. shift the beginning of the sentence to the right so that it looks similar on the page. Add the parenthetical source reference on the same line with the last verse, if there's enough room on that line; otherwise give the source reference on the next line, flush with the left margin of the block quote.

Satan's rebellion against God initially appears to be an act of liberation from an unjust imperial ruler:

Here at least

We shall be free; th'Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence.
Here we may reign secure; and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven. (I, 258-63)

But when Milton later links Satan, figuratively, with a "great sultan" (I, 348) who is decorated with the products of "the gorgeous East" (II, 3) such as "barbaric pearl and gold" (II, 4), his own political rebellion becomes tainted with the power, the egotism, and the despotic nature of imperial aspiration.

If you want to leave out one or more lines in a poem, indicate the omission by three four dots if the quotation is no longer than two verses (the same as in quoting prose), and by a full line of dots if the ellipsis appears in a block quote.

Satan's rebellion against God initially appears to be an act of liberation from an unjust imperial ruler:

Here at least

We shall be free; th'Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence.
[........................................]
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven. (I, 258-63)

When quoting from recent or not (yet) canonical poetry, it is often more useful to indicate the page number of the volume of poems than the line numbers of a given poem.
In poem number IV in Midsummer, Derek Walcott invokes the brutal world of imperialism by reference to the central figure of Heart of Darkness:

By the pitch of noon, the one thing wanting
is a paddle-wheeler with its rusty parrot's scream,
whistling in to be warped, and Mr. Kurtz on the landing. (14)

4. QUOTING DRAMA

When quoting parts of a play, you may either integrate short excerpts in quotation marks in your text or use the format of the block quote if you want to render dialogues or soliloquies. In both cases you should acknowledge the source by indicating the act with a capitalized Roman numeral, the scene with a lower-case Roman numeral, and the line numbers with Arabic numerals.

After the ghost's disappearance from the battlements of Elsinore, Hamlet, lapses into a meta-theatrical discourse. The question "You hear the: fellow in the cellarage" (I, v, 151) refers to the staging convention at the Globe theater where the ghost disappeared through a trap-door into the hollow space beneath the planks. By addressing the ghost "truepenny" (I, v, 150) and "old mole" (I, v, 162), Hamlet actually: jibes at his fellow-actor impersonating the ghost rather than speaking to a semblance of his deceased father.

When quoting several lines of versified drama in your text, indicate the line breaks by slash (/), leaving a space on either side of the slash.

Hamlet famously chides Horatio's rationalism by saying, "There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (I, v, 161-67).

When quoting dialogues, write the name of the character fully in caps (e.g. HAMLET) and indent the quotation from the left margin (like a block quote).

GHOST: [Beneath] Swear.
HAMLET: Well said, old mole! Canst work i' the earth so fast? HORATIO: Oh, day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
   There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio,
   Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. (I, v, 161-67)

As in poetry, when you are quoting from contemporary or not (yet) canonized plays, it may be more useful to give the page number in parentheses instead of the act, the scene and the line, partly because (post)modern plays often aren't subdivided by acts and scenes.

5. EMBEDDING QUOTES

You may embed the borrowed language within your own prose, in which case you have to adjust your own syntax to the syntax of the quote.

Terry Eagleton claims that structuralists are not interested in "relating the work to the realities of which it treated, or to the conditions which produced it, or to the actual readers who studied it [...]" (109), a view that is shared by most Marxist critics.
6. **Punctuation**

A colon should be used to introduce a quotation that follows a full sentence.

Terry Eagleton understands that the principles of structuralism offended literary critics: "Structuralism scandalised the literary Establishment with its neglect of the individual, its clinical approach to the mysteries of literature, and its clear incompatibility with common sense" (180).

If the sentence preceding the quote is a partial sentence, use a comma after verb phrases or no punctuation where not necessary.

Terry Eagleton asks aptly, "What kind of reader do the poem's tone, rhetorical tactics, stock of imagery, armoury of assumptions imply?" (120).

If the quoted sentence ends on a question mark or an exclamation point, the punctuation belongs inside the end-quotation mark. If the entire sentence is a question or an exclamation in which the quotation is embedded, the punctuation comes after the page reference. In other words, question marks and exclamation points belong inside the quotation marks if they are part of the quote, and outside the quotation marks if they are not. Compare the two following examples:

**Example 1:** Is it really true that "structuralism has in some ways become complicit with the aims and procedures of [late capitalist] society [...]" (Eagleton 122)? (The question mark does not belong to the quote.)

**Example 2:** Terry Eagleton asks aptly, "What kind of reader do the poem's tone, rhetorical tactics, stock of imagery, armoury of assumptions imply?" (120). (The question mark belongs to the quote.)

If your quote begins with a capitalized letter, you must either leave that letter capitalized in order to signal the beginning of a sentence or a proper name in the original document, or use a lower case letter in square brackets to signal that you altered the quotation:

**Altered to lower case letter:** Terry Eagleton wonders "[w]hat kind of reader [...] the poem's tone, rhetorical tactics, stock of imagery, armoury of assumptions" could be seen to imply (120).

7. **Ellipsis (or “three dots”)**

You may choose to reproduce only a portion of a sentence in your quotation, if the original source contains words and phrases that are not essential to your purpose. This is called an ellipsis and can be achieved by either leaving away the beginning of the sentence, by omitting some words inside the sentence, or by breaking off the quotation before it reaches a full stop. In each case, indicate the omission by **three dots** (with or without square brackets; see below):

"The 'ideal' or 'competent' reader is a static conception: it tends to suppress the truth that all [...] reading involves the mobilisation of extra-literary assumptions [...]" (Eagleton 125).

According to the MLA handbook, you only have to use square brackets if the three dots are already used in the original quotation (i.e. in order to distinguish your changes from the text of the original). However, it is also acceptable to always use square brackets.
If you want, you can decide in each single case whether square brackets are necessary or not. However, we strongly advise you to always use square brackets to indicate that you made changes to the original quotation. This method is not only safer, it is also much easier.

If you leave out a whole sentence or more within a given quotation, indicate this gap with four dots, since the fourth dot indicates the full stop. If you use square brackets, the fourth dot is placed outside the square brackets:

Without square brackets: “Loosely subjective talk was chastised by a criticism which recognised that the literary work, like any other product of language, is a construct, whose mechanisms could be classified and analysed like the objects of any other science .... Meaning was neither a private experience nor a divinely ordained occurrence: it was the product of certain shared systems of signification” (Eagleton 106-7).

With square brackets: “Loosely subjective talk was chastised by a criticism which recognised that the literary work, like any other product of language, is a construct, whose mechanisms could be classified and analysed like the objects of any other science [...]. Meaning was neither a private experience nor a divinely ordained occurrence: it was the product of certain shared systems of signification” (Eagleton 106-7).

8. FRAGMENTARY QUOTES
You may cut a quoted sentence in two (or more) pieces and insert your own words in between the fragments. In that case, always open and close the quotation marks within each part of the quote. Add the page reference after the last quote in the sentence.

Terry Eagleton’s critique of structuralism hinges in part on his rejection of its postulated reader, someone who not only needs to be a “mirror-reflection of the work itself” but also a structuralist expert, “fully equipped with all the technical knowledge essential for deciphering the work” (121).

Note: Be careful not to distort the original meaning of the source in the process of fragmentation.

9. INTERNAL QUOTATION
If you have a quote within a quote, use single quotation marks to indicate the internal quotation.

“This is why Jakobson is able to say, in a famous definition, that ‘The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination’” (qtd. in Eagleton 99).

10. PARAPHRASE
With due caution (see notes on plagiarism) you may choose to paraphrase a source by giving the gist of its argument in your own words. Still, it is paramount that you identify the source of your paraphrase so as not to commit plagiarism.

Terry Eagleton’s tirade against structuralism is tempered by the admission that this school of thought at least alerted readers and critics to the fact that any manifestation of language, including literature, was constructed, that its meaning was neither determined by individual experience nor resided in a god-given
order of immanence (106-7).

The original source reads as follows:

"Loosely subjective talk was chastised by a criticism which recognised that the literary work, like any other product of language, is a construct, whose mechanisms could be classified and analysed like the objects of any other science [...]. Meaning was neither a private experience nor a divinely ordained occurrence: it was the product of certain shared systems of signification" (Eagleton 106-7).


CHAPTER TWELVE: THE FORMAT OF TITLES

In English, the rules for capitalization in titles are different from the general rules for capitalization. Whenever you include the title of a work (e.g. article, short story, or novel) in a text or in the bibliography, you have to apply the rules outlined below.

1) Capitalize the first and the last word of titles and subtitles

2) Capitalize all words except

   • definite and indefinite articles (e.g. a, the)

   • conjunctions (e.g. and, or, but)

   • deictic pronouns (e.g. this, those)

   • short prepositions (e.g. in, for, after)

Examples

• Bibliographical entry


• In a text

  Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw has, since its publication, given rise to a bulk of utterly conflicting interpretations. (The title is printed in italics because The Turn of the Screw is a work that was originally published independently.)

  In “Turning the Screw of Interpretation,” Shoshana Felman uses concepts from psychoanalysis to analyze James’s novella. (The title is printed between quotation marks because the text was not published independently.)

Titles are always formatted in exactly the same way, whether they occur in the bibliography or in the essay itself. The rules for capitalization, for instance, apply in both cases. Similarly, works that were originally published independently are always printed in italics, while texts that were not published independently are always printed between quotation marks.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CITING REFERENCES

PARENTHETICAL DOCUMENTATION (MLA STYLE)

All instructors will accept the MLA style of citing references, which is also called parenthetical documentation (for more information: Joseph Gibaldi. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003). Some instructors may also accept other styles.²

In the MLA style, every quotation needs to be accompanied by a reference that lets the reader know where to find the complete text from which the quote is extracted. This is done in the parenthetical style. In other words, you need to indicate in parentheses after the quotation the name of the author and the page number of the source. The parenthetical references send your readers to the “Bibliography” (or “Works Cited,” or “Sources” list) appended at the end of your essay if they want to look up a particular source.

- Whenever you quote or paraphrase another source, you must add a parenthesis containing the name of the author you quoted and the page number.

- You may omit the name of the author, if you have already introduced his or her name in your own prose. In that case, the page reference is sufficient.

- If the “Bibliography” (or “Works Cited” or “Sources” list) contains more than one text by the same author, you also have to add (part of) the title (see below).

N.B.: In the main text, the parenthesis always comes directly after the end quotes and is followed by a period/full stop (or comma or semi-colon, if that is the appropriate punctuation in the sentence). In block quotations, the parenthesis is placed after the final period.

1. Citing a secondary source

At the end of the quote, insert a bracket with the author’s name and the page number. Type the final period/full stop or any other punctuation mark after the closing bracket.

"Naipaul's affection for the values of the English bourgeoisie in their imperial prime is expressive of an only half-concealed colonial nostalgia" (Nixon 36).

2. Citing a primary source (same as 1)

"And for the first time in my life I was one of the crowd. There was notion in my appearance or dress to distinguish me from the crowd eternally hurrying into Churchgate Station" (Naipaul 43).

² e.g. the Chicago style, which is used in many journals. For more information: University of Chicago Press Staff. The Chicago Manual of Styles. 15th ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.
3. Citing a primary or secondary source, after having named the author in the same passage or sentence

In this case, indicate only the page number in brackets, without the author’s name, because the reader already knows whom you are quoting.

Rob Nixon dismisses Naipaul’s appeals to a postcolonial state of permanent homelessness because “From the outset, his colonial education had oriented him toward England […]” (11).

4. Citing a primary or secondary source by multiple authors

Indicate all the authors’ names if there are three or fewer authors, or the first author plus “et al.” if there are more than three authors.

Examples: (Booth, Colomb, and Williams 20)
(Baym et al. 120).

5. Citing volume and page numbers of a multivolume work

Indicate the volume number followed by a colon and the page number. (The following example refers to the brief introduction to Christina Rossetti’s poems in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, vol. 2; as the introductory passages in The Norton Anthology are unsigned, they are referred to under the name of the editing team, Abrams et al.)

(Abrams et al. 2: 1472-73)

6. Citing two or more works by the same author or authors

If you cite from more than one work by the same author in your paper, then indicate the author’s last name, followed by a comma, followed by the title of the particular work (or a shortened version thereof) and the page reference. This holds true for books as well as articles.

Examples: (Eagleton, Literary Theory 120)
(Eagleton, Illusions 32)

7. Citing indirect sources

If you cite a passage not from the source itself, but from someone else’s quotation of that source, then attribute the quote to the work in which you found it, with “qtd. in” preceding the author’s last name and the relevant page number(s).

“This is why Jakobson is able to say, in a famous definition, that ‘The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination’” (qtd. in Eagleton 99).

Note: It is always better to quote from the original source, since this indicates that you are familiar with the context from which the quote is taken. We recommend that you cite indirect sources only if the original is not available or at least very difficult to find.
8. Citing an article on the Internet

Indicate the name of the author and the paragraph number, preceded by “par.” or “pars.,” counting from the top of the web page from which the quote is taken. We number Internet sources by paragraph rather than by page because different computer systems set to different national paper sizes scroll the same text differently, so that the paragraph is the only stable entity.

Naipaul's reception in India has been mixed. While some Indian commentator laud An Area of Darkness (1964) for its "lapidary grace and piety" (Vaidyanathan par. 1), others deplore the "spiritual dislocation that [they] find so disturbing in Naipaul's relentless assault on the life and culture of the Third World countries" (Maini par. 5).

9. Citing electronic sources listed by title, e.g. on CD-ROM or a database

Indicate simply the title of the entry (e.g. “Metaphor” from Britannica Online or “Satire” from The Oxford English Dictionary on CD-ROM) or the name of the database itself if there are not separately titled sections. See section 6.2 under “Chapter Fourteen: Bibliography” for information about including such sources in your list of sources.

FOOTNOTES

Do not use any of the Latin abbreviations you may have come across in footnotes before (“ibid,” “op.cit.” etc.). They are obsolete.

In MLA style, footnotes are used to convey information that is indirectly related to your argument, that would encumber the flow of your ideas, or that is of secondary relevance (but still relevant).³

The footnote reference in the text appears in smaller font, superscript, and is usually appended at the end of a sentence. You may choose to put all the footnotes into a separate section at the end of your paper (but before the bibliography), in which case they are preceded by the heading “Notes.” Here is an example of an MLA footnote that appears at the bottom of the page.

The compulsion to isolate a structure, for instance the distribution of certain narrative 'functions' in myths, partakes of a discourse of generalisation that considers the elements in a system to be void of meaning as elements. Only in relationship to other elements do these units acquire meaning.⁴

³ In Chicago style, you acknowledge your sources in the footnotes. In addition, they can contain incidental information just like the MLA footnotes.

⁴ Terry Eagleton illustrates this point by 'inventing' a myth in which a father quarrels with his son, whereupon the son leaves the home, falls down a pit and is rescued by the father after the sun shines into the pit: “You could replace father and son, pit and sun, with entirely different elements – mother and daughter, bird and mole – and still have the same story” (95).
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: BIBLIOGRAPHY

After indicating the provenance of each quote or paraphrase in your text, you need to add a section containing the total bibliographical information of those sources. In this way, your readers will always be able to look up the sources themselves or to check the accuracy of your quotations.

THREE KINDS OF LISTS

There are three kinds of lists for bibliographical information. You must make an informed choice about which list you are going to include at the end of your paper.

1) **Works Cited**: This list only contains references to works from which you have actually quoted or which you paraphrased.

2) **Bibliography**: This list contains all the information of the "Works Cited" list, plus sources that you read but did not quote.

3) **Sources**: This list contains the information of the "Bibliography," plus works that you did not read but which relate to the topic of your paper.

We recommend that you choose the “Works Cited” list for papers written in the course of your studies, and either the “Works Cited” list or the “Bibliography” for your Lizenziats- or Masterarbeit. The order of names is alphabetical. The first line of each entry appears at the left-hand margin with all subsequent lines indented from the margin.

In the following, you will find examples for the most important types of bibliographical entries in MLA style. For more information, please consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Some instructors may also accept other styles (e.g. Chicago style).

Always distinguish between “Primary Sources,” i.e. the text(s) you write about, and “Secondary Sources,” i.e. all the other texts that you cite, paraphrase, or consult (see Appendix: “Sample Paper”).

1. BOOKS

The basic bibliographic entry is organized as follows:

    Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publication place: Publisher, Publication date. Medium of publication.

Make sure to:

- *Italicize* titles of books.
- Place the titles of chapters, articles, poems and short stories into quotation marks.
- In titles with two parts, insert a colon to separate the first part from the second.
• Follow the rules for capitalization in titles (see "Chapter Eleven: Capitalization in Titles.")

1.1. A book by a single author

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983. Print. (Note that the abbreviations “U” and “P” stand for “University” and “Press”, respectively.)


If you want to cite an introduction or a preface, then list the bibliographic entry under the author of the introduction or preface. **Don’t forget to include the page numbers.** Also, add the name of the author of the book (as well as the editor’s, if there is one) after the title of the book.


If the introduction or preface has a title, add the title of the introduction or preface in quotation marks:


1.2. An anthology or compilation

List the entry under the name of the editor (last name first), followed by a comma and the abbreviation “ed.” If there is more than one editor, list the first editor last name first, and subsequent editors first name first, with “and” preceding the name of the last editor, followed by the abbreviation “eds.” If there are more than three editors, then only give the name of the first and add “et al., eds.”


1) Listing the introduction to an anthology or compilation:


2) Listing an article or chapter from an anthology or compilation:


1.3. Two or more books by the same author

If you list more than one item by the same author, print three hyphens (---) or an Em dash (—)
directly underneath the name of the previous entry. Alphabetize the entries by title.


1.4. **A book by two or more authors**

List the entry under the name of the first author (last name first), and then list all subsequent names first name first. (If there are more than three authors, give only the name of the first, followed by “et al.”) Do the same with multiple editors: the first editor’s name appears last name first, followed by all the other editors listed first name first.


1.5. **Books in a language other than English**

The bibliographical information required and the format of the reference are exactly the same for books published in a language other than English.


1.5. **A book published in a series**

Some books are part of a series, i.e. a continuing sequence of books that focus on a more or less clearly defined core theme. If the book is part of a series, the bibliographical entry must include the series title (and, if available, the series number):


Note that a series is published irregularly, whereas periodicals (i.e. journals, newspapers, weeklies, yearbooks, etc.) are published periodically (i.e. in regular intervals). The bibliographical entry for a periodical is different from that for a book published in a series (see below).
2. STORIES, CHAPTERS, ARTICLES, AND EXCERPTS

If you cite only part of a book or journal, include the title of the story, chapter, poem, article, etc. in quotation marks, and the title of the book or journal in italics. In addition, always provide the page numbers (first to last page of the text).

2.1. A short story


2.2. A chapter in a book by a single author


2.3. A work or article in an anthology

The reference must provide the name of the author, the title of the work or article, and the title of the anthology, followed by the name(s) of the editor(s), publication information (place, press and year), and the page numbers of the work or article itself.


If the text you want to cite was originally published as an independent work (e.g. an entire novel, play, or epic poem), then give the title of the work in italics. The title of works that were not published independently is given in quotation marks. In both cases, you may add the date of original publication after the title of the work you cite.


2.4. An article in a reference book

If the article is signed, then give the author first; if the article is unsigned, then give the title first and alphabetize according to the first word of the title which is not “the” or “a.” If the reference book arranges the articles alphabetically you may omit the page numbers.

When the reference book is very well known, you do not have to give full publication information. The edition and the year of publication is sufficient:


For less familiar reference books, provide full publication information:


2.5. An article in a journal

The reference must provide the title of the journal, its volume and issue numbers, its year of publication, as well as the pages numbers of the article itself after a colon.


2.6. An article in a newspaper

You should reference a newspaper article by giving the author's name and the title of the article in quotation marks, followed by the name of the newspaper in italics, the date, and the part (e.g. Al, B1, C3) where the article appeared. If the newspaper comes out in different editions, such as a national edition or a late edition, indicate that as well.


3. EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

3.1. An edition

Many books are edited by the authors themselves, in which case no mention is made of an editor. But when someone else does the editing, this must be reflected in your bibliography. If an editor is stated on the title page of the book, include this in the reference after the title and before the publication information, with the editor's name(s) preceded by “Ed.” or “Eds.” In some cases, it is useful to add the year of original publication after the title (e.g. when the date is important to the argument of the essay).


3.2. A translation

The format is the same as for the edition, except that the translator's name is preceded by the abbreviation “Trans.” The year of publication is the year of the translated edition. If an editor is listed besides the translator, list the editor's name after the title and before the translator.


4. A MULTIVOLUME WORK

If you refer to two or more books that are part of a multivolume work, include the total number of
volumes after the title or after the editor’s name (if there is an editor).


If the multivolume work was issued over a number of years, include the range of years after the publisher’s name.


If you cite only one volume, provide the exact number:


5. **Online sources**

To list an online source you have to indicate the name of the author, editor, or database (if available), as well as the newsgroup or the heading of the text you looked up. Further, you must indicate the date on which the online page was last modified (this information is usually at the bottom of any given site), **as well as the date on which you accessed the website**. The MLA no longer requires the URL (Universal Resource Locator = Internet “address”) of the site, but you may still indicate it in angle brackets at the end. Also note that a PDF file of a printed journal article with page numbers can be treated like a print source, even if it was actually accessed online.

5.1. **A book online**


5.2. **An article in an online periodical**


5.3. **A professional site**


5.4. **A personal site**

6. **ONLINE DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPÆDIAS**


7. **FILMS**

Sometimes, you may refer to a film in a very general way (i.e. not to a specific edition). In this case, you need to include the film's title, the name of the director, the distributor, and the year of release. You may add other data that is important in the context of your essay, such as the names of the writers, performers, or cinematographer.


Usually, however, you should refer to a specific edition of a movie (e.g. a videocassette or a DVD):


If you are citing the contribution of a particular individual, then begin with that person's name:

APPENDIX
SAMPLE PAPER

What follows is a sample student paper. If you wish to study outstanding examples of the critical essay, look at some or all of the following articles:


A Deconstructed, Reconstructed Place: Reclaiming Identity in Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*
“If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see” (Kincaid 3), the speaker declares at the very beginning of the essay *A Small Place*. In terms of literary categorization, Jamaica Kincaid's text is to be located between a native's travel narrative and a political, postcolonial manifesto, wrapped up in something the author herself calls “very autobiographical fiction” (Eberstadt par. 3). While the speaker does take the reader – or the implied tourist – on a journey, the narrative does not have the embellishing, seductive tone of a travel guide of Antigua. Quite the contrary: the speaker forces the readers to eye themselves from her hostile point of view. Thus, it appears to be hard to categorize *A Small Place*, to put it in a single place; it is precisely this dis-placement, or non-placement, that represents the complexities of a formerly colonial nation, in this case Antigua, in reconstruction. Impregnated with hate for the British colonizer, Kincaid's essay deliberately provokes a feeling of guilt in the implied readership by overtly addressing the sinful “you”. By doing so while narrating the hypothetical story of a first cultural contact between a tourist and the local customs, physical and ideological boundaries are unmistakably accentuated. Moreover, the narrator debunks Western dichotomies of “nativeness” and “Otherness”, “civilization” and “primitivity” by firmly taking on the perspective of an “Other native”; a local in an exotic paradise, at least to the eyes of the much pilloried “North American or European, to be frank, white” man (Kincaid 4). Published in 1988, only seven years after Antigua's disassociation from Britain, *A Small Place* is the literary reconquest of a long lost island. By using a number of different narrative elements, the implied author manages to deconstruct the given colonial structure and reconstruct a more current, albeit unstable, postcolonial identity. Much in the sense of the sociological theory of duality of structure (Eriksen 91), the narrator carves out her own role in the fragile structure of postcolonial Antigua. In this essay, I will show how different literary devices are used to reclaim and reconstruct identity by taking a closer look at the meaning of focalization and doubleness, historical fiction and semiotic spaces, and the ambiguity of language.

If there is one thing the narrator is very straightforward about from the very beginning, it is the divide between natives and non-natives, or better said tourists. The first pages of Kincaid's essay are a drastic attack on European and North American tourists, which she addresses in the second person style: “You emerge from customs into
the hot, clean air: immediately you feel cleansed, immediately you feel blessed (which is to say special): you feel free” (Kincaid 5). This way of directly challenging her readership creates a strong polarity between “You” and “I”, the native and the Other. By not only addressing the tourist, but also making assumptions about his or her state of mind and perception, thus, giving a voice to the addressee, both physical and ideological boundaries are strengthened: the tourist looks different, “to be frank [you are] white” (4), was socialized differently, “you are from New York and take taxis, you are used to this kind of driving” (6), and thus perceives differently “still, this might frighten you – you are on holiday, you are a tourist” (6). The tourist addressed by the narrator in such a face-threatening fashion stands in a paradigmatic or even metonymical axis with Western society and global capitalism. By overtly distancing herself from it and constructing a binary opposition, the narrator debunks the notion of subordination, omnipresent in colonial ideology. There is no longer a highly hierarchical distinction between “white” and “black” or, to quote a recurring theme of postcolonial theory, “white and not quite white” (Bhabha 15). The boundary she delineates is one of “You” and “I”; she reclaims control over her agency by using an authoritative tone, until then an exclusive right of the colonizer.

However, in spite of the aggressive divide the narrator makes, there is more to this dichotomy than just a clear-cut division between Antiguans and Europeans or North Americans. Going one step further in the narrative, this clear opposition is again destabilized, displaced; the boundary between “You” and “I” is blurred. Considering Kincaid’s aforementioned autobiographical tone, it is crucial to take account of the author’s personal background. At the age of 17, Kincaid leaves her native island Antigua to go to New York and escape the colonial oppression (Hunter 1). On the height of her academic career, she returns to Antigua, encountering a place different to the one she had known before its decolonization. This impression is clearly reflected in A Small Place: “The Antigua that I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up, is not the Antigua you, a tourist, would see now” (Kincaid 23). At this point, the nature of the addressee becomes strikingly ambiguous. If, until now, it was made clear that the described contact was one between the Other and the local, the tourist and the Antiguan, meaning is henceforth destabilized. An undertone of guilt is, in fact, suddenly added to the speaker’s reflexion:
“I can say to them what went wrong: they should never have left their home, their precious England, a place they loved so much, a place they had to leave but could never forget” (24). If we isolate the trope of “their precious England”, it could also be read as an equivalent to the more open “beloved motherland” - in the case of our autobiographical narrator, this would be Antigua. Thus, the cultural contact focalized upon might as well be the one of an expatriate returning to her roots. In terms of focalization, the narrator's omniscient view on the addressee becomes a question of rhetorics. In this passage, the “you” could easily be the author, describing her own displacement; her own position, neither inside nor outside: “one day, when you are sitting somewhere, alone in that crowd, and that awful feeling of displacedness comes over you [...] you make a leap from being that nice blob just sitting like a boob in your amniotic sac [...] to being a person” (Kincaid 16). This destabilization of the subject is theoretically supported by the concept of doublessness, developed by postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha. In his studies about the construction of modern nations, Bhabha claims that a postcolonial, neo-national identity can only be constructed by splitting the subject (Bhabha 54): a native is always an Other, too, and vice-versa. It is this ambiguity, this destabilization that represents the complexity of postcolonial cultural identities.

A further attempt to reconstruct identity can be seen in the role that Antiguan history plays in the essay. In the third section of A Small Place, the narrator tells the story of British legacy and the foul, devastated government that has grown out of it during the past years of self-rule. Before taking the “you” – regardless of whether the “you” is the tourist or a reflection of the narrator – on a journey through Antigua's history, the narrator states: “The Antigua that I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up, is not the Antigua you, a tourist, would see now” (Kincaid 23). This utterance does not simply imply that there is something like a long gone Antigua, of which the addressee will never be a witness, let alone a part – again, spatial and temporal boundaries are reinforced – it also narratively creates the notion of history and, thus, a time segment that has been constructed by Antiguans on the unstable ground left behind by the colonizer. What is presented in this section is a meticulously detailed account of the founding of the Antigua Trade Union in 1939 (Kincaid 69): “It eventually became, along with being a union, a political party, demanding universal suffrage, demanding that land in Antigua not be owned by
syndicates made up of English people [...] but by Antiguans, and demanding that Antiguans rule Antigua.” This repetition clearly creates a detachment from colonial structures, emphasizing the ability of Antigua to govern and rebuild itself. In fact, the historical details presented in *A Small Place* have the function of legitimization. If we consider the concept of semiotic space, this claim becomes much clearer. In their extensive study about semiotic landscapes, Adam Jaworski and Crispin Thurlow formulate: “in the most general sense, [semiotic landscapes are] any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making” (Jaworski & Thurlow 2). The space of Antigua, described as “of surreal beauty” (Kincaid 77), becomes a real place, a semiotic place, as soon as the native’s intervention is narratively inscribed. Antigua, by including historical facts in the essay, becomes a place being lived in, worked in, a space occupied by Antiguan agency. Thus, this part of the narrative institutionalizes the postcolonial identity, which the implied author is attempting to reconstruct.

Language, as well as history, is a seminal component of cultural identity. It is, thus, of crucial importance in the reconstruction of collective character. In postcolonial literary theory, there has always been a particular emphasis on the issue of language due to its ambiguous nature: Most publications of postcolonial literature are not written in the local vernacular, but in the language of the colonizer. *A Small Place* is not an exception; Jamaica Kincaid does not write in Antiguan Creole, but in English. The question coming up at this point is: Is it even possible to fully create a boundary between former colonizer and former colonized if the all-encompassing, vital medium of language is so essentially intertwined with the “motherland”? After all, as postcolonial theorist Roy Osamu Kamada argues, “Using the language [means using] – consciously or unconsciously – the aesthetic modes of the colonial authority” (Kamada 18). This problematic is explicitly and implicitly addressed in Kincaid’s essay. The explicit question asked by the speaker, “For isn’t it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime?” (Kincaid 31), is followed by accusations towards the criminal – the “You” – without giving a proper answer to the very question asked. While this explicit treatise is hardly satisfactory for the present analysis, the implicit aspects of the issue of language are all the more so.
One of the most neatly described spaces in Kincaid’s account of Antigua – although intradeferentially no longer present – is the library. Described as an old building destroyed in a tragic earthquake a few years earlier, the library becomes a symbol for the defeated colonizer. The theoretical concept that comes into play here is “postcolonial abrogation”: “Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words” (Ashcroft Griffiths and Tiffin 38). The Antiguan library, as highlighted by Kincaid, was destroyed shortly before the island got its independence from Britain (Kincaid 21). Thus, the reader witnesses a deconstruction of the colonial identity in the narrative; the speaker in A Small Place distances herself from the colonizer’s institutions by taking the liberty of physically destroying them. The library, now given an interim location above a “dry-goods store in an old run-down cement-brick building” (42), will never regain the prestigious status it used to have. Language is now stored in a run-down building; its beautiful, flawless space has been destroyed. Although the prestige of a luxurious, “English” library is now gone, the speaker makes use of irony to show how little she laments the consequences of the earthquake: “If you saw the old library, […], the beauty of us sitting there like communicants at an altar, taking in, again and again, the fairy tale of how we met you, your right to do the things you did, how beautiful you were, are, and always will be; […] you would see why my heart would break at the dung heap that now passes for a library in Antigua” (43). With this verbal irony, the speaker suggests that, although independence has added complexity to life in her native land, she does not at all – or merely ironically – grieve for the colonizer.

Jamaica Kincaid's poignant postcolonial essay A Small Place is a story about love and hate for the narrator's home land Antigua and for its colonial history; an account of the shambles that remain when forced, artificial structure vanishes and of how identity needs to be reconstructed, molded out of these fragments, textually and, moreover, physically. The ten-by-twelve miles island is placed under a 80 pages long magnifying glass for the reader to see its beauty and its rotten instability at the same glance; and as Corinna McLeod fittingly suggests, A Small Place is a metaphor for the physical island of Antigua (McLeod 78). Indeed, both text and island are small places in which many
polarities coexist: nativeness and Otherness, fiction and reality, diachrony and contemporaneity, bitterness and pure nostalgia. Finally, as illustrated by the essay’s final lines, in which Kincaid deconstructs the divide between “You” and “I” she had previously delineated, she indicates that there is no easy solution to the complex contradictions of postcolonial identity. In fact, both text and island prove to be stably rooted and unstably floating at the same time: “[...] once you throw off your master's yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human being, and all the things that adds up to. So, too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings.”

[2276 words]
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