

## How to Use a Quotation (the Four C's)

© 2005, Dr. Brian Hale, Chattanooga State

- 1. Claim** – State the idea that the quotation supports.
- 2. Context** – Tell who said the quotation and under what circumstances. Also, phrase the context so that the quotation fits smoothly into the text.
- 3. Copy** – Copy the quotation word for word from the original source. Only use ellipses (...) if words are left out in the middle of a quotation, NOT at the beginning or end. Also, if the quotation can be clarified by replacing a pronoun with a noun or if a slight phrasing change makes the quotation read more smoothly in context, then the writer may put any changed or added words in square brackets [ ].
- 4. Connect** – The most important step is to explain how the quotation supports the claim. Rule #1 of writing is “The reader is stupid.” Unless the quotation restates the claim word for word, the writer must explain. The writer should use key words from the claim and from the quotation in this explanation to connect the two.



### Explanation:

1. The claim here asserts a cause and effect: the deception foisted upon people by unrealistic fiction causes Howells's rejection of that fiction.

2. The context establishes who (Howells) and where (Criticism and Fiction) the quoted material came from. Also, since the quotation is missing a grammatical subject and verb, the context supplies them (“fiction is”) so that the quotation fits neatly into the sentence, which then reads smoothly.

3. The copy is accurate but for two changes. The “s” in square brackets is added to make the subject-verb agreement work. This change is allowable because it is purely grammatical. Also, the ellipses indicates words omitted (“swift and slow, but inexorably sure”) to shorten the quotation. This change is allowable because the omission does not change the meaning of the quotation.

4. The connection between the claim and the quotation is made with repeated words (such as “unrealistic” and synonyms (such as “using drugs” for “opium eating”).

### Example:

1. William Dean Howells rejects unrealistic writing because it deceives people about reality.

2. In his book Criticism and Fiction, Howells argues that unrealistic fiction is

3. “the emptiest dissipation, hardly more related to thought or the wholesome exercise of the mental faculties than opium-eating” (313) because it “imagine[s] a world where the sins of sense are unvisited by the penalties following ... in the real world” (313).

4. In short, Howells finds unrealistic novels are immoral, and reading it is for him as big and sinful a waste of time as using drugs because it leads people to believe that, like the characters in these novels, they will not have to face the consequences of their actions.

Howells, William Dean. From Criticism and Fiction. McMichael, George et al. Anthology of American Literature, vol. II. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson / Prentice-Hall, 2004: 308-323.