

## Embedding Quotations

The best way to include a quote in your essay's body paragraph is to provide a snippet of the source material that supports your thesis tucked into the natural flow of your own voice in the essay. Beware of relying too heavily on the author's words; instead, paraphrase most of the material and present only quoted elements that are particularly compelling. Also, remember that quotes belong only in body paragraphs. Resist the temptation to begin your introductory paragraph with a quote from the book you're discussing in the essay.

Now, let's say you've decided to write an essay arguing that Atticus Finch, the protagonist in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, redefines the qualities of heroism. You like this passage from page 64 of the novel when Atticus' daughter Scout sees snow for the first time and want to include it as support in a body paragraph. →

Next morning I awoke, looked out the window and nearly died of fright. My screams brought Atticus from his bathroom half-shaven.  
"The world's endin', Atticus! Please do something – !" I dragged him to the window and pointed.  
"No, it's not," he said. "It's snowing."

As you build your body paragraph, you might be tempted to write something like this:

Lots of ways to build smooth frames:

### The author...

addresses  
adds  
admits  
argues  
asserts  
believes  
cautions  
claims  
comments  
compares  
considers  
criticizes  
declares  
demonstrates  
denies  
discusses  
emphasizes  
examines  
illustrates  
implies  
insists  
introduces  
mentions  
notes  
observes  
points out  
presents  
reasons  
reveals  
says  
states  
suggests  
thinks  
warns

Always refer to authors/sources in present tense.

Never use the words "quote" or "quotation" in your frame. These two words interrupt the smooth flow of your writing voice.

**As author Harper Lee shows the heroic side of Atticus, she uses this quote: "Next morning I awoke, looked out the window and nearly died of fright. My screams brought Atticus from his bathroom half-shaven" (Lee 64).**

This sentence is clunky and sounds too mechanical. The frame does little to help the reader understand the background of what's happening in this scene to lead up to this quote.

If an essay has two or more sources, include the author's last name in each citation for clarity. If the essay uses only one source, use only the page number after establishing the title and author of the work earlier in the essay.

Instead, try something with a smoother frame, like this:

**Although his children see Atticus as a man of intellect rather than action, the reader realizes Atticus has a clear instinct to physically defend those in peril when his young daughter Scout panics at her first-ever sighting of snow and her "screams brought Atticus from his bathroom half-shaven" (64).**

In M.L.A. format, notice there is no period immediately after the quote. Instead, the period is placed at the end of the page citation, outside of the parentheses.

Notice that the quoted material in this sentence is split apart but still flows nicely. Also, notice that the lack of an author name in the page citation shows the reader that this is a single-source essay.

Another option:

**Scout goes on to explain that she "nearly died of fright" when she saw a blanket of snow outside her bedroom window and her "screams brought Atticus from his bathroom half-shaven" (64).**

You might even go on to discuss in this body paragraph section the idea that Atticus is a low-key, but effective heroic figure as evidenced by the reaction of Scout, whose first instinct upon believing the end of the world is at hand is to call for her father's help because she knows he is able to fix seemingly unsolvable problems. This symbolically connects to the larger issues in the book, as the people of Maycomb need Atticus to fix their troubled world, too.