

# Rhetorical Grammar for Expository Reading and Writing

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STUDENT VERSION

MODULE 6: INTO THE WILD

## Writing About What Others Say

### Activity 1

#### Guided Composition

This activity is based on is based on John Krakauer, *Into the Wild*, Chapter One, “The Alaska Interior.”

The purpose of this activity is for you to write a paragraph on the topic of this module. Your teacher will read a paragraph while you listen, and then read it again while you take notes. You will then write your own paragraph based on what you heard using your notes.

#### Noticing Language

Is the person speaking in these sentences speaking directly, or is someone repeating what another person said? How do you know?

1. “Alex, just Alex,” Chris replied.
2. He said that he intended to live off the land for a few months.
3. According to Gallien, “Living in the bush is no picnic.”
4. He told Gallien that he didn’t need any other gear or a hunting license.

#### Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

The materials labeled Rhetorical Grammar Concepts are for your reference as you do the activities in this unit.

#### Paraphrase

Expository writing often involves evaluating texts written by others. The first step is to tell your readers what the author said by either quoting or paraphrasing. Quoting is most effective for short pieces of text, such as a few distinctive words or sentences. Paraphrasing is helpful when you want to communicate the main ideas of a passage while avoiding long quotations.

As you write about an author’s work, it is essential to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of using someone else’s words or ideas as though they were your own. Sometimes inexperienced

writers feel that it is all right to “borrow” from a text in order to make their own writing better. However, other people’s writing is their intellectual property. Using that writing without appropriate credit is the equivalent of stealing. You can fail an entire course or even be expelled if you are caught plagiarizing.

Writers use two approaches to avoid plagiarism. One is to quote the writer’s exact words using quotation marks and providing the name of the author and the source of the words. Another way is to summarize or paraphrase the writer’s words. When you put the writer’s ideas into your own words, you can’t just move the author’s words around; to avoid plagiarizing, you must explain the author’s ideas completely in your own words. In all cases, you must indicate whose words or ideas you are using and what the source of those words or ideas is. This is usually accomplished through citations. When you are editing your essay, check that you have quoted, summarized, or paraphrased accurately and that you have given the source correctly. Your readers will judge your credibility as a writer, in part, by the precision with which you quote and paraphrase.

### Guidelines for Paraphrasing

- Reread the passage you intend to paraphrase. Check any unfamiliar words in a dictionary so you are sure you understand the passage accurately.
- Write your paraphrase without looking back at the passage. Use your own words.
- Check what you have written against the original to make sure it is accurate. Make any needed changes.
- If you have used any distinctive words or phrases from the original, put quotation marks around them.
- Make sure you have included the name of the author, the name of the source (if not already given), and the page reference for the passage you have paraphrased.

## Activity 2

### Paraphrasing a Paragraph

This activity is based on the last paragraph of Chapter Eight, “Alaska.”

Write a paraphrase of the following paragraph (the last paragraph in Chapter Eight). Be careful to use all your own words; do not use any quotes. Also, check any words that are unfamiliar in a dictionary to ensure your paraphrase is accurate.

McCandless didn't conform particularly well to the bush-casualty\* stereotype. Although he was rash, untutored in the ways of the backcountry, and incautious to the point of foolhardiness, he wasn't incompetent—he wouldn't have lasted 113 days if he were. And he wasn't a nutcase, he wasn't a sociopath, he wasn't an outcast. McCandless was something else—although precisely *what* is hard to say. A pilgrim, perhaps (85).

\*"Bush" means wild, uncleared country; a bush-casualty is someone who has gone into the wilderness and died.

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## Quotation

Writers choose to quote when the author's words are especially distinctive or when the meaning might be lost in a paraphrase. Sometimes this means that a writer will quote whole sentences or even a whole paragraph. Often, however, the best strategy is to use a single sentence or even a phrase from the text and incorporate it into your own words about the text.

### Guidelines for Quoting

- Always introduce the quotation using your own words. Use a variety of verbs to introduce quotations and to suggest how you feel about the quotation.
- Fit the grammatical structure of the quotation into the grammatical structure of your own sentence.
- Give the author's full name the first time you refer to him or her. After that, use only the last name. Put the page number at the end of the quote.
- Give the name of the source the first time you quote from it. Underline or use italics for books, movies, and longer works: *Into the Wild*. Use quotation marks for the titles of articles, essays, and chapters in books: "The Stikine Ice Cap."
- If the quotation is longer than four lines (for example, see the quotation in Activity 2), introduce it with a colon and indent the whole quotation.
- If you leave words out of the quotation, indicate the omission with an ellipsis, three spaced periods (. . .). If you insert words, put them in brackets ([ ]) to show that they were not in the original text.

## Keeping sentences grammatically correct when quoting

When you integrate a quotation into your own writing, your words and the quoted words must fit together grammatically. This means that you have to be careful about what you quote and where you insert the quotation. You may also have to make changes within the quote, in which case you need to put brackets around the changed words.

### Activity 3

#### Incorporating Quotations

This activity is based on Chapter Eight, “Alaska.”

Write a short paragraph in which you explain what you think McCandless’s motivation was for going into the wilderness. Incorporate one or more quotations from Chapter Eight, “Alaska.” Remember that you can agree or disagree with Krakauer’s interpretation that McCandless did not want or plan to die.

#### Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

#### Making the Speaker and the Context Clear

Writers try to make their writing interesting by choosing words that are precise and varied. It is possible to introduce every quotation with “He said . . .”, but it will produce boring and repetitive writing. Krakauer uses a variety of colorful verbs to introduce quotations (in **bold** below). He also varies the tenses that he uses to introduce quotations.

#### Verbs to Introduce Quotes and Reported Speech

<b>shouts</b>	<b>muses</b>	<b>insists</b>	<b>remarks</b>	<b>describes</b>
<b>points out</b>	<b>observes</b>	<b>stresses</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>remembers</b>
explains	argues	maintains	suggests	discusses
notes	claims	believes	recommends	questions
admits	claims	asserts	advises	explores
reflects	feels	doubts	shows	asks
observes	stresses	emphasizes	concludes	examines

When you use the verbs in the first four columns to introduce reported speech, you will often use the pattern: **subject + verb + “that”** clause.

Roman stressed **that** “living off the land . . . is incredibly difficult” (185).

When you use the verbs in the last column to introduce reported speech, you will often use the pattern: **subject + verb + noun phrase** (including phrases that begin with a question word). Some verbs can use either pattern.

Krakauer explores **how** difficult it is for adults “to recall how forcefully we were once buffeted by the passions and longings of youth” (186).

Roman stressed the difficulties of “living off the land.”

As a writer, you can communicate your interpretation of a quotation or reported speech by the verb you choose to introduce it. Compare the two sentences:

Roman **said** that “living off the land . . . is incredibly difficult” (185).

Roman **stressed** that “living off the land . . . is incredibly difficult” (185).

Using *said* makes your position about the statement that follows neutral. If you choose the verb *stressed*, you are communicating your interpretation that Roman felt the challenge for McCandless to try to live off the land was great.

Now compare these sentences.

Krakauer feels that it is difficult for adults “to recall how forcefully we were once buffeted by the passions and longings of youth” (186).

Krakauer explores **how** difficult it is for adults “to recall how forcefully we were once buffeted by the passions and longings of youth” (186).

Using *feels* in the first example does not indicate any interpretation on your part. Using *explores* suggests that you believe that Krakauer has thoughtfully looked at a variety of explanations for why adults generally judged McCandless’s actions harshly.

By carefully choosing the verb that you use to introduce a quotation or reported speech, you suggest your position about the quotation before you actually analyze its meaning and relevance to your argument.

## Activity 4

### Making the Speaker and the Context Clear

This activity is based on Chapter Nine, “Davis Gulch.”

When you incorporate quotations from a book or article into your own writing, it is essential to indicate specifically who is speaking and what the circumstances are. This is especially important when you are quoting someone who is being quoted by the author. When

you quote, you need to let your reader know who is speaking or writing and the context of the quotation so a reader can judge its relevance and validity as support for your assertions.

Look up the following quotations from *Into the Wild*. Introduce each quotation, making sure that it is clear who is speaking and what the circumstances are.

1. *While living on the streets in Las Vegas, McCandless wrote in his journal, "It is the experiences, the memories, the great triumphant joy of living to the fullest extent in which real meaning is found" (37).*
2. "What Everett Reuss was after was beauty, and he conceived of beauty in pretty romantic terms" (77).
3. "I have not tired of the wilderness. Rather, I enjoy its beauty and the vagrant life I lead more keenly all the time" (87).
4. "Children can be harsh judges when it comes to their parents, disinclined to grant clemency . . ." (122).
5. "If something captured my undisciplined imagination, I pursued it with a zeal bordering on obsession" (134).
6. "No longer to be poisoned by civilization he flees, and walks alone upon the land to become lost in the wild" (163).
7. "He had a need to test himself in ways, as he was fond of saying, 'that mattered'" (182).
8. ". . . his essence remains slippery, vague, elusive" (186).

### Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

#### Punctuating Quotations

- **To quote a whole sentence:** Introduce the quote with your own words, and use a comma and quotations marks (and usually a capital letter for the first word of the quoted sentence). Put the page number of the quote in parentheses after the closing quotation mark, and then add your end punctuation.
- **To quote a word or phrase:** Use quotation marks, but **do not** capitalize the first word of the quote.
- **To quote a longer passage:** If you need to quote a passage that is four lines or longer, use a colon at the end of the sentence you have used to introduce the quote and indent the whole quote. When you do this, do not use quotation marks, but you still must indicate the page where the passage occurs.
- **To shorten a quote, use an ellipsis.** An ellipsis is three dots (. . .) separated by spaces that indicate that words have been left out. Use four dots if you are also leaving out a period from the original text. Be careful to make the final wording clear and smooth.

- **To change a word in a quote:** If you must change a word (or words) in a quote to make it fit with your own words, use **square brackets** ([ ]).
- **To quote a writer who quotes another person (a quote within a quote):** Use regular (double) quotation marks ( " ) to show that you are quoting the writer and **single quotation marks** ( ' ) around the words that the writer quoted.

## Activity 5

### Punctuating Quotations

This activity is based on Chapter 18, "The Stampede Trail."

Punctuate the following quotations from Chapter 18, "The Stampede Trail." Be sure to compare each sentence to the original and find *exactly* which words are quoted. Cite the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence that includes the quotation.

1. *Page 187:* In Alaska, McCandless discovered the truth of John Campbell's observation that "the life of a hunter carries with it the threat of deprivation and death by starvation" (187).
2. *Page 187:* Before his death, McCandless had underlined the passage in *Doctor Zhivago* that asserts that love of one's neighbor is essential for a human being to contribute to progress.
3. *Page 188:* According to Krakauer, despite having killed and eaten animals and birds and gathered wild potatoes, berries, and mushrooms, McCandless was on the precarious edge of starvation because he had run up a sizable caloric deficit.
4. *Page 189:* Krakauer seems to believe that McCandless had learned that he needed other people, and that he planned to become a member of the human community when he returned to the Lower Forty-Eight.
5. *Page 192:* According to Krakauer's initial theory, McCandless had committed a careless blunder, confusing one plant for another, and died as a consequence.
6. *Page 198:* As he was dying, McCandless abandoned the cocky moniker, Alexander Supertramp, in favor of the name given to him at birth by his parents.
7. *Page 199:* In spite of his lonely, agonizing death, McCandless's last words were, I HAVE HAD A HAPPY LIFE AND THANK THE LORD. GOOD-BYE AND MAY GOD BLESS ALL!



## Editing Student Writing

Read the following student essay. Then incorporate the selections from *Into the Wild* that follow it into the essay at the places indicated by the numbers in parentheses. Incorporate quotations from the text and paraphrase Krakauer's text in your own words. Make sure you indicate clearly who is speaking in the quotation and what the circumstances are.

Shaun Callerman is a typical critic of Chris McCandless. (1)

Callerman is convinced that Chris was merely an ignorant young man biting off more than he could chew, a young man who ventured arrogantly into the wild guided by farfetched ideas and flawed logic. Although I agree to some extent with Callerman's interpretation, I also believe that he has failed to think about Chris's childhood, upbringing, and subsequent motives that brought him finally to a bus in the Alaskan wilderness.

Chris McCandless was not your average Joe. He chose a life of solitude and shunned society and the things that it represented. (2) The question is, what led him to act in this manner? Krakauer, the author of *Into the Wild*, delved into what could have led Chris to choose such an uncommon lifestyle. One of the main factors that Krakauer explores is Chris's relationship with his father, Walt. (3) These conflicting attitudes, coupled with Walt's alternative marriage and children, created a change in Chris's outlook, which could have led him to make the decision to go into the wild. (4) Chris's actions were reasonable to himself, and I find it hard to say these actions were arrogant. To him, they were noble ideas, worthy of his time and effort.

However, Callerman is right that Chris McCandless made mistakes based on arrogance. Chris can be admired for his ideas, but his execution was flawed. (5) He made crucial mistakes that could have



been avoided, and these mistakes cost him his life. He put himself in a situation for which he was not fully prepared. It's like a boxer moving up a weight class when he's not ready. He is courageous for doing so even though his actions can be perceived as foolish or arrogant. Chris pushed himself too hard and fast. He paid the price, but this doesn't mean that his reasoning was wrong as much as his timing and planning.

Callerman fails to realize that people do not act foolishly without having a reason. People who appear to act foolishly always have a logical motive that can explain the situation. (6) McCandless was not crazy; he was different. It wasn't romantic silliness that led him into the wild; it was the dream of finding himself and connecting on a higher level that few of us can fully comprehend.

#### **Selections from *Into the Wild* to incorporate into student essay**

1. "I don't admire him at all for his courage nor for his noble ideas. Really, I think he was just plain crazy" (quoted from the Writing Topic for the *Into the Wild* module).
2. "Oh, how one wishes sometimes to escape from the meaningless dullness of human eloquence, from all those sublime phrases, to take refuge in nature . . ." (passage underlined by Chris in his copy of *Doctor Zhivago*, 189).
3. "Both father and son were stubborn and high-strung" (64).
4. "He wanted to prove to himself that he could make it on his own, without anybody else's help" (159) (Gaylord Stuckey, truck driver who gave McCandless a ride from the Yukon Territory to Fairbanks, Alaska).
5. He tried to live entirely off the country—and he tried to do it without bothering to master beforehand the full repertoire of crucial skills (182).
6. And he wasn't a nutcase, he wasn't a sociopath, he wasn't an outcast. McCandless was something else—although precisely *what* is hard to say. A pilgrim, perhaps (85).

## Activity 7

**Editing Your Guided Composition**

Return to your guided composition from Activity 1.

1. Revise your guided composition by incorporating the following quotations. Then check that you have paraphrased or quoted using the guidelines from this module.

“Alex, just Alex.”

“He wasn’t carrying anywhere near as much food as you’d expect for that kind of trip.”

“Living in the bush is no picnic.”

“Alex admitted that the only food in his pack was a 10-pound bag of rice.”

“How I feed myself is none of the government’s business.”

“I don’t want to know what day it is or where I am. None of that matters.”

2. Compare your edited version with the original.
3. What did you learn through this activity that you can apply to your own writing?

## Activity 8

**Editing Your Own Writing**

Reread your essay on *Into the Wild*.

- Use an asterisk to mark a place where you have made an assertion without adequate support. Find a passage in *Into the Wild* that provides support for the assertion. Following the guidelines for paraphrasing, paraphrase the passage and incorporate it into your essay.
- Use an asterisk to mark a second place where you have made an assertion without adequate support. Following the guidelines for quoting, select the portion of the passage that you want to quote and insert it into your essay. Make sure you have made the speaker and the context clear.
- Exchange your essay with a partner and discuss any questions you have. Check with your teacher if you can’t agree on an answer.
- Reread your entire essay to check that you have
  - Provided sufficient support from the text
  - Reproduced quotations and paraphrased accurately
  - Made the speaker and the context clear
  - Selected the best verb to introduce the quotation
  - Punctuated quotations correctly

## Summary—Optional

A summary is a shortened version of a fairly long piece of text: an article, a chapter, or a whole book. When you write a summary, you cannot assume that your readers are familiar with the text that you are writing about or agree with you about it. By summarizing what you have read, you can

- Enable readers who are unfamiliar with the text to understand your analysis and conclusions.
- Enable readers who are already familiar with the text to judge whether your understanding of the text is the same as theirs.

### Identifying the Source and the Author

A summary should identify the text that is being summarized, including the title and the name of the author. Use the author's full name the first time you refer to him or her. After that, use only the last name. Never refer to an author by just his or her first name.

**Incorrect:** In *Into the Wild*, Jon writes about his own experiences as a mountain climber. Jon draws parallels between his attempt to climb the Devil's Thumb and Chris McCandless's journey into the Alaskan wilderness.

**Correct:** In *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer writes about his own experiences as a mountain climber. Krakauer draws parallels between his attempt to climb the Devil's Thumb and Chris McCandless's journey into the Alaskan wilderness.

### Choosing the Time Frame

For your summary, you can choose to use either the past time frame or the present time frame, which is called "the historical present." Using the present time frame makes the events seem more immediate and interesting even though your readers know the events actually occurred in the past.

## Activity 9

### Using the Past Time Frame to Summarize *Into the Wild*

Fill in the blanks below with the correct form of the verb in parentheses. For the summary, use verbs in the past time frame. *Note:* some verbs are in the passive voice.

*Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer, \_\_\_\_\_ (publish) in 1996. It \_\_\_\_\_ (tell) the story of Christopher McCandless, a young man who \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to Alaska to try to find out about himself and about life. In doing this, he \_\_\_\_\_ (inspire) by great writers like

## Activity 10

Thoreau, whose book, *Walden*, \_\_\_\_\_ (offer) his reflections on living apart from mainstream life. However, McCandless \_\_\_\_\_ (be) unprepared for the brutality of the Alaskan wild. He \_\_\_\_\_ (make) crucial mistakes that \_\_\_\_\_ (lead) to his death and \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) his family to grieve for him.

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**Using the Present Time Frame (historical present) to Summarize *Into the Wild***

Fill in the blanks below with the correct form of the verb in parentheses. For the summary, use verbs in the present time frame (historical present). *Note:* some verbs are in the passive voice.

*Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer, \_\_\_\_\_ (publish) in 1996. It \_\_\_\_\_ (tell) the story of Christopher McCandless, a young man who \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to Alaska to try to find out about himself and about life. In doing this, he \_\_\_\_\_ (inspire) by great writers like Thoreau whose book, *Walden*, \_\_\_\_\_ (offer) his reflections on living apart from mainstream life. However, McCandless \_\_\_\_\_ (be) unprepared for the brutality of the Alaskan wild. He \_\_\_\_\_ (make) crucial mistakes that \_\_\_\_\_ (lead) to his death and \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) his family to grieve for him.

## Activity 11

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**Activity 11: Summarizing Part of a Chapter**

This activity is based on Chapter Eight, "Alaska."

Write a summary of the story of Gene Rosellini. (Begin with the paragraph that starts, "And then there was the wayward genius . . ." and end with the paragraph that starts, "The trip never got off the ground.") Use the following sentence to start your summary. Notice that it will determine the time frame for your summary:

In Chapter Eight, "Alaska," Jon Krakauer reports that many Alaskans thought that Chris McCandless was just another young rebel.