

CSI: Evidence Hunt - How Writers Use Facts

Materials Needed

- Access to 1-2 short, recent Opinion Editorials (Op-Eds) or feature articles (e.g., about social media rules, climate action, or school schedules). Ensure the text contains clear examples of evidence.
- Highlighters or colored pens (three different colors).
- Notebook or computer for note-taking.
- Worksheet/digital document containing the chosen Op-Ed text.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define and differentiate between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing as methods of presenting textual evidence.
2. Identify and categorize instances of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing within an opinion editorial.
3. Explain why a writer chooses one method over the others in a specific context.

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

Hook: The Gossip Game

Imagine your friend, Alex, told you something really interesting about a new school policy. Now, you need to tell another friend, Chris, about it. You have three ways to tell Chris:

1. **Word-for-Word:** You repeat exactly what Alex said, using quotation marks and naming Alex. (*"Alex said, 'The cafeteria will only serve pizza on Fridays now.'"*)
2. **In Your Own Words (Detailed):** You rephrase Alex's statement completely but keep all the detail. (*According to Alex, the new lunch schedule means we can look forward to pizza every Friday.*)
3. **The Gist (Short Version):** You tell the main takeaway quickly. (*Alex told me the school is changing the lunch menu.*)

Discussion Question: Why would you choose the word-for-word method (Quoting) over the short version (Summarizing)? (Expected Answer: Accuracy, tone, or when the exact words matter.)

Success Criteria

You will know you are successful when you can analyze a piece of writing and explain whether the author used the exact words, used their own words to capture the detail, or used their own words to capture just the main idea.

II. Body: The Evidence Toolbox (35 minutes)

A. I Do: Defining the Tools (Modeling) (10 minutes)

When writers build an argument in an Op-Ed, they need evidence (facts, stats, expert opinions). They

use three primary tools to present that evidence. Let's look at the rules for each:

The Evidence Toolbox Chart

Method	Goal/Purpose	Relationship to Original Text	Key Clues/Signs
1. Quoting	Show the authority, precision, or strong voice of the source.	Identical (Word-for-word).	Quotation marks (" ") and often uses formal signal phrases (e.g., "Dr. Smith stated," "According to the report...").
2. Paraphrasing	Present detailed information from a source without cluttering the writing with quotation marks.	Similar length to the original; completely different sentence structure and wording.	No quotation marks. Uses signal phrases (e.g., "The researchers found that," "In her explanation, Jones detailed...").
3. Summarizing	Give background information, a general overview, or the main idea of a long source.	Significantly shorter than the original (just the main points).	Very concise language. Focuses on the "big picture" (e.g., "A study of teen habits concluded that," "The article broadly suggested...").

Educator Modeling Example: (Use a short paragraph from a fictional or very simple news piece, modeling how you would convert it into each of the three forms and identifying the structural differences.)

B. We Do: Guided Practice - Finding Clues (15 minutes)

We are going to analyze a brief excerpt from an Op-Ed together. Use your three colored highlighters (or markers/pens):

- **Color 1 (Blue):** Quoting
- **Color 2 (Green):** Paraphrasing
- **Color 3 (Red):** Summarizing

Activity: Op-Ed Excerpt Analysis

(Provide a 5-8 sentence excerpt here.)

Step-by-Step Analysis:

1. Read the first section that refers to external evidence. Does it have quotation marks? (If yes, highlight Blue.)
2. If it doesn't have quotation marks, does it cover a lot of detailed information that seems rewritten? (If yes, highlight Green.)
3. If the author is setting the stage or referring to a large body of work quickly ("Most historians agree that..."), is it brief and general? (If yes, highlight Red.)

Check-In/Formative Assessment: Review 2-3 specific examples from the excerpt. Ask: "Why is this a paraphrase and not a quote? What tells you that?" (Target Answer: No quotation marks, but it contains specific data points.)

C. You Do: Independent Evidence Annotation (10 minutes)

Now, apply these detective skills to a full Op-Ed (or a longer, separate excerpt). Your task is to annotate the text using your three colors to categorize every piece of evidence presented.

Instructions:

1. Read the Op-Ed focusing only on the sections where the author brings in outside evidence (facts, expert opinions, studies).

2. Use your highlighters/markers to identify and color-code: Blue for Quoting, Green for Paraphrasing, Red for Summarizing.
3. For three distinct examples (one of each type), write a brief note explaining why the author likely chose that specific method. (Example: "Chose quoting here because the exact language of the law is critical to the argument.")

III. Conclusion (10 minutes)

Closure and Recap

Let's review our key takeaways. When a writer presents evidence, they are making a strategic choice.

- **Quoting:** Use when _____ (the original words are powerful/unique).
- **Paraphrasing:** Use when _____ (the detailed information is necessary, but the exact wording isn't).
- **Summarizing:** Use when _____ (the background information or general idea is enough).

Summative Assessment: Exit Ticket

Answer the following scenario in 3-5 sentences:

A writer is arguing that homework should be banned. They reference a new university study that spent 40 pages detailing the negative mental health impacts of excessive homework. Which evidence presentation method (Q, P, or S) should the writer use for the following situations, and why?

1. To use the exact, highly emotional statement made by a distressed student quoted in the study.
2. To briefly mention that the study exists and supports the argument.
3. To convey the specific data points regarding sleep deprivation discovered by the researchers.

Differentiation and Adaptability

Scaffolding (For Struggling Learners or Shorter Lessons)

- **Pre-Highlighting:** Before the lesson, pre-highlight the Op-Ed to mark evidence sections. The learner only needs to assign the correct category (Q, P, or S) next to the highlighted section, rather than finding the evidence first.
- **Sentence Frames:** Provide sentence starters for the analysis portion: "This is a quote because I see _____," or "The writer chose to summarize because the information is _____."

Extension (For Advanced Learners or Deeper Study)

- **Strategic Choice Analysis:** Have the learner rewrite a short paragraph from the original Op-Ed, changing one piece of paraphrased evidence into a direct quote, and one direct quote into a summary. They must then analyze how that change shifts the tone or credibility of the writer's argument.
- **Op-Ed Response:** Challenge the learner to write a brief (150-word) response to the Op-Ed they analyzed, requiring them to use at least one quote, one paraphrase, and one summary correctly in their own writing to support their counter-argument.