

Quotations in Critical Essays

1 Specify precisely where the quotation comes from.

2 Give the context so that the reader understands the background situation.

Terraces by Willy Russell is a play I have read recently. It has sixteen scenes and it is set in a town in England. It is all about a man called Danny, his wife and his child. It all starts in the pub where everyone is celebrating the win of their football team. In the third scene everyone is talking about what they would do for the team when Danny says,

“It’s not as if we would paint the street for it.”

Eddy takes it seriously and thinks it is a great idea. He arranges it with Billy the shop keeper to get yellow paint to paint all the houses in the street. This is ironic because it is exactly the opposite of what Danny intended. It is also ironic because Danny ends up being the victim by a twist of the plot. It is totally unexpected yet appropriate that Danny should be the one who becomes an example to the whole street of what he is explaining.

6 Explain what this quotation proves about the book/poem/play as a whole.

5 Name the literary feature and explain it to the reader. Use the technical term.

4 Quote accurately, inside double inverted commas, with a blank line above and below the quotation.

3 Explain who is speaking to whom about what

The diagram illustrates the steps for quoting in a critical essay. It features a central text block with a quotation and an analysis. Six numbered boxes with arrows point to specific parts of the text: 1 points to the source of the quotation; 2 points to the background context; 3 points to the speaker and audience; 4 points to the quotation itself; 5 points to the literary feature (irony); and 6 points to the overall significance of the quotation.

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3. Explain who is speaking to whom about what.
4. Quote accurately, inside double inverted commas, with a blank line above and below the quotation.
5. Name the literary feature and explain it to the reader. Use the technical term..
6. Explain what this quotation proves about the book/poem/story as a whole.
7. Link this to your developing argument.