

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

The university and the English department take academic honesty very seriously. The 2004-2006 university catalog states that

Students may not receive or give assistance during examinations, **plagiarize essays, term papers, etc.** [. . .] Such behavior may result in disciplinary sanctions that lead to failure of the course, suspension, dismissal or expulsion from the University (15, emphasis added).

At Xavier, plagiarism may result in one or more of the following consequences

- required conference with the instructor
- failure for the assignment
- failure for the course
- notification of the English Department chair
- notification of the student's advisor and the chair of his/her major department
- administrative action such as recommendation of suspension or expulsion

Plagiarism will be discussed in all first-year writing classes (English 0990, 1010, 1020, and 1023HN) in order to teach students how to cite secondary sources correctly and to avoid unintentional plagiarism. *However, students are also responsible for their own learning.*

To avoid plagiarism when writing a paper using secondary sources, students must consult their handbooks, record their research accurately, and proofread their writing carefully. **If you do not fully understand what plagiarism entails and how to avoid it,** consult your instructor or visit the Writing Center for further instruction.

What is plagiarism? Diana Hacker in *The Bedford Handbook*, 6th edition, notes that Three different acts are considered plagiarism: (1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words (576).

Such definitions may not be immediately clear to students, so to help you distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable borrowing of ideas and language, we have compiled the following examples drawn from actual student essays. Note the emphasized sections throughout.

Verbatim (Word for Word) Copying

ORIGINAL text:

Within the first few lines of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" we are faced with such adjectives as clear, sunny, fresh and warmth. She goes on to paint a picture of small children just out of school for the summer, as the townspeople gather for the annual Lottery. This leads us to believe that the rest of the story is as cheery as the summer day initially described. We as the readers are virtually unaware of the horrible senseless events that lie ahead. ("Symbolism in 'The Lottery'" www.collegepapers.com)

STUDENT essay:

Within the first few lines of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" we are faced with such adjectives as clear, sunny, fresh and warmth. She goes on to paint a picture of small children just out of school for the summer, as the townspeople gather for the annual Lottery. This leads us to believe that the rest of the story is as cheery as the summer day initially described. We as the readers are virtually unaware of the horrible senseless events that lie ahead.

This constitutes plagiarism because

- the student has simply **cut and pasted the entire passage** from the source without any quotation marks or other acknowledgement

Patchwork Writing

ORIGINAL texts (2)

Television viewing is a major activity and influence on children and adolescents. Children in the United States watch an average of three to four hours of television a day. By the time of high school graduation, they will have spent more time watching television than they have in the classroom. (www.familyresource.com)

Time spent watching television takes away from important activities such as reading, school work, playing, family interaction, and social development. Children also learn information from television that may be inappropriate or incorrect

(American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry “Children and Watching TV”)

STUDENT essay:

In today’s generation crime is highly related to the media. Television is the greatest influence on children today. Television viewing is a major activity and influence on children and adolescents. Children in the United States watch an average of three to four hours of television a day. By the time of high school graduation, they will have spent more time watching television than they have in the classroom.

Time spent watching television takes away from important activities such as reading, school work, playing, exercise, family interaction, and social development. Children also learn information from television that may be inappropriate or incorrect. Children see crime all the time on television, most children are impressionable. This insures that those children watching violent and explicit programs will only try to copy.

This constitutes plagiarism because

- student has **cut and pasted substantial portions of multiple sources**, weaving these portions into her own writing without quotation marks or other acknowledgement

Failure to Cite Borrowed Ideas & to Enclose Borrowed Language in Quotation Marks

ORIGINAL text:

Note how **utterly the woman misunderstands the man’s actions**. To her, the act of burying the child was one of supreme indifference, while to him it must have been one of supreme suffering – an attempt **to convince himself, through physical labor, that this is the natural order of things; or an act of self-punishment**, a penance befitting the horror of the loss; or simply a way of steeping himself in his grief, of forcing it into the muscles of his arms and back, of feeling it in the dirt on his clothes.

(“Interpretation of Robert Frost Works”www.groton.k12.ct.us)

STUDENT essay:

He committed himself to the task of digging his child's own grave, "making the gravel leap and leap in the air" (74); this may have been **an act of self-punishment or an attempt to convince himself, through physical means, that this is the natural order of things. The wife utterly misunderstands the man's actions.** To her, the act of burying the child is one of indifference, and she fails to recognize "any feelings" (70) he possesses for the child.

This constitutes plagiarism because

- the student **does not acknowledge** use of the source for key ideas
- the student has **incorporated several phrases** from the source word for word

Inadequate Paraphrase & Failure to Cite Borrowed Language

ORIGINAL text:

In 1967, Giovanni became actively involved in the Black Arts movement, a loose coalition of African-American intellectuals who wrote politically and artistically radical poems which strived to raise awareness of black rights and the struggle for racial equality. The connection between literature and politics continued to influence her work for decades to come.

("Nikki Giovanni (1943-) Biographical Sketch" www.ivillage.com)

STUDENT essay:

The connections between literature and politics would continue to take up her attention for decades to come. **In 1967, she became actively involved in the Black Arts movement, a partnership of African American intellectuals who wrote politically and creatively radical poems aimed at raising awareness of black rights and promoting the struggle for racial equality** ("Nikki Giovanni").

This constitutes plagiarism because

- although the student has provided a citation, **most of the original language is preserved**
- when the student has changed the language, he has **merely inserted synonyms** rather than rephrasing the ideas in his own words (“partnership” for “coalition;” “creatively” for “artistically”)

Questions about Common Knowledge

The only source material that does not require documentation is common knowledge. Diana Hacker defines common knowledge as “information your readers could find in any number of general sources because it is commonly known. For example, it is well known that Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993” (*The Bedford Handbook*, 6th ed. 577). More specific information (such as “twelve percent of tenth graders in Arizona in 1999 passed that state’s graduate exit exam” or “Sende Berenson introduced women’s basketball at Smith College in 1892”) **will require** acknowledgement of its source.

Sometimes, however, students assume that because a phrase or thought comes from the textbook used in class that it constitutes common knowledge (both the teacher and the student have access to the original text). **Such material still needs to be cited** and direct quotations must be placed in quotation marks.

ORIGINAL text:

Springsteen’s songs celebrate the outcast, the working-class dreamer.

(Joseph Kelly *The Seagull Reader: Poems*)

STUDENT essay:

With “The River,” the poem is based on events in Johnstown, Pennsylvania where there was the working class and the rich. The speaker is part of the working class and so he **celebrates the outcast, the working-class dreamer** through his experience.

ACCEPTABLE use of the text:

Joseph Kelly argues that “Springsteen’s songs celebrate the outcast, the working-class dreamer” (174), and the speaker in “The River,” with whom the reader identifies, is a factory worker.

Another example...

ORIGINAL text:

In the essay "Writing Short Stories," O'Connor wrote that "there is a wooden part of [Hulga's] soul that corresponds to her wooden leg."

(Elizabeth McMahan, Susan X. Day, and Robert Funk *Literature and the Writing Process* 149)

STUDENT essay:

In other words, Hulga's wooden leg is a part of her soul.

ACCEPTABLE use of the text:

Flannery O'Connor claimed that Hulga's wooden leg was symbolic of "a wooden part of her soul" (qtd. in McMahan, Day, and Funk 149).

Too Much Help

Students often seek the assistance and advice of friends and family in writing papers, but they should be very careful to maintain authorship of their essays. If the person helping **supplies words and/or ideas** which the student claims as his or her own, **this is the same as copying materials** from a printed source.

Student's usual writing:

Do you think that a dog look in itself for a perfect body? Well some dog owner wants it for their dog. Now dog are not just man best friends but their athlete. Pet owner are now putting their dog in show to prove that their dog is the best.

Student's writing after, as he said, "a little help from a friend":

The writing on this ad slowly shrinks from top to bottom which gives the reader a sense of closure. The main point of the ad is to try to show that Grey Goose is the finest liquor and that consumers should trust the company and purchase the product.