USING QUOTED MATERIAL AS A MEANS OF SUPPORTING YOUR ARGUMENT

1. Setting up a **LONG QUOTE**, usually identified as a quotation of four lines or more in your essay. We usually refer to these quotations as "indented" or "set-off."

**EXAMPLE:**

Chillingworth's reaction when he first sees Hester Prynne on the scaffold reveals much about his own character:

At his arrival in the market place, and some time before she saw him, the stranger had bent his eyes on Hester Prynne. It was carelessly, at first, like a man chiefly accustomed to look inward, and to whom external matters are of little value and import unless they bear relation to something within his mind. Very soon, however, his look became keen and penetrative. A writhing horror twisted itself across his feature, like a snake gliding swiftly over them.

Chillingworth's shock is evident here. Yet, it is not immediate. He is a man who is so inwardly-oriented that it takes time for the implications of the scene to affect him.

As always, *lead in* to the quote. Then, indent from both left and right margins. Single space the LONG QUOTE and add no additional quotation marks. Leave quotation marks already in quoted material as they are. Avoid overly long quotations.

If, however, your teacher requires **MLA** formatting for block quotes, then the rules are different. In MLA format, you continue *double spacing*, and you only indent (two tabs) on the *left margin.**

**MLA EXAMPLE:**

Chillingworth's reaction when he first sees Hester Prynne on the scaffold reveals much about his own character:

At his arrival in the market place, and some time before she saw him, the stranger had bent his eyes on Hester Prynne. It was carelessly, at first, like a man chiefly accustomed to look inward, and to whom external matters are of little value and import unless they bear relation to something within his mind. Very soon, however, his look became keen and penetrative. A writhing horror twisted itself
across his feature, like a snake gliding swiftly over them.

Chillingworth's shock is evident here. Yet, it is not immediate. He is a man who is so inwardly-oriented that it takes time for the implications of the scene to affect him.

Notice in both of the above examples that you have 1) an assertion, 2) an example (in this case a quotation from the text), and 3) an explanation.

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2. Using **SHORT QUOTATIONS**.

**EXAMPLES**:

#1
Chillingworth is described early in the novel as a man of "remarkable intelligence," and as a man with an intense interest in learning.

#2
Hester Prynne, even in her ignominious situation, is described in generally positive terms; she is said to be "tall, with a figure of perfect elegance."

Notice that in these cases no punctuation is needed before the quote. Commas and periods *always go inside* quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation points go inside or outside of quotations depending on the sense of the passage.

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3. Quoting material (such as dialogue) that is *already inside* quotation marks:

**EXAMPLE**:

Reverend Dimmesdale, addressing Hester Prynne, says, "I charge thee to speak out the name of thy fellow-sinner and fellow-sufferer." But despite the repeated pleas and demands, Hester refuses to submit: "I will not speak!" announced Hester, turning pale as death."
Note the double quote situation; single quotes enclose material that was already in quotation marks in the original text. The regular quotation marks go around the entire passage.

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4. **Punctuating Quotes**: Three possible situations.

- Use a **COMMA** before a quotation when it is preceded by a *verb of speech*, such as "says," "yells," "exclaims," etc.
- Use a **COLON** when there is no verb of speech in the immediate vicinity before the quote. In this case, your lead-in needs to be an independent clause.
- Use **NO PUNCTUATION** where none would be needed if the quoted material were in a quote.

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**REMEMBER**: To compose a **LEAD-IN**, tell us WHO is speaking the passage, either the name of the character or the narrator, and WHAT the situation is. The reader needs to know the context of the passage.

**AVOID** using the word "quote" in your lead-in. For example, this lead-in is awkward:

*The following quote shows Hester's dignity in the face of her accusers:*

Also avoid using the awkward follow-up explanation. For example:

*This quote shows that...*