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A Teacher's Guide to Plagiarism: Elementary School Students

*Within this guide you will find a definition of plagiarism,
an explanation in age-appropriate terms,
a guide to teaching practical tactics students can use to keep their work original,
and worksheets that may be used to put those tactics into practice.*

Plagiarism, when used as a verb, can be defined as when one attempts “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own : use (another's production) without crediting the source,” and stems directly from the Latin word for kidnapping (Merriam-Webster). Elementary school students may find this definition confusing. They may love a certain part of their favorite book, copy it down on a piece of paper, and think to themselves, “I wrote it on my paper, so I did write it.” However, words like “steal” and “kidnapping” bring a seriousness and clarity to the conversation that is often overlooked when referencing plagiarism in the context of elementary schools.

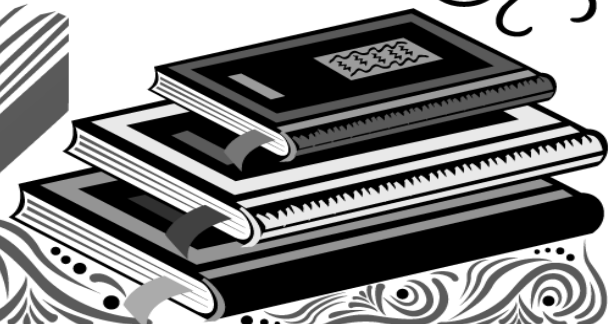
It is important to make students aware of the consequences of plagiarism. For elementary school students, there may not be strict disciplinary guidelines followed by your school district. When the decision falls to you, it is important to trust your instincts, as each situation is different. Oftentimes, it is effective to simply have an open and calm one-on-one conversation with the student to determine the context in which the error was made. You then have adequate information to decide the appropriate course of action.

Take initiative to proactively remind students that when doing any kind of schoolwork, they must be attentive to their writing to ensure they are not directly or indirectly stealing the words or ideas they have read or heard, no matter the source material.

An effective way to combat plagiarism is to break down the definition in terms elementary school students will understand, and follow-up with practical methods students can use to keep their work original and succeed academically.

We hope you will find this guide to be a helpful teaching resource.
Please email any questions or suggestions to editor@libraryofpoetry.com

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What Is Plagiarism: A Guide For Elementary School Students

Below you will find simplistic explanations and examples covering the different aspects of plagiarism, that younger students should find easy to understand.

As stated above, *Merriam-Webster* defines plagiarism as such:

“to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own : use (another's production) without crediting the source” (Merriam-Webster).

“to steal:”

Definition: To take something that is not yours without permission of the owner.

Example: Your classmate has brought a snack in their lunchbox that you want,
And you take it without them noticing.

“and pass off ... as one's own:”

Definition: To make it look like something is yours when it is not.

Example: After taking your classmate's snack, you put it in your own lunchbox
so that it looks like you brought the same snack with you from home.

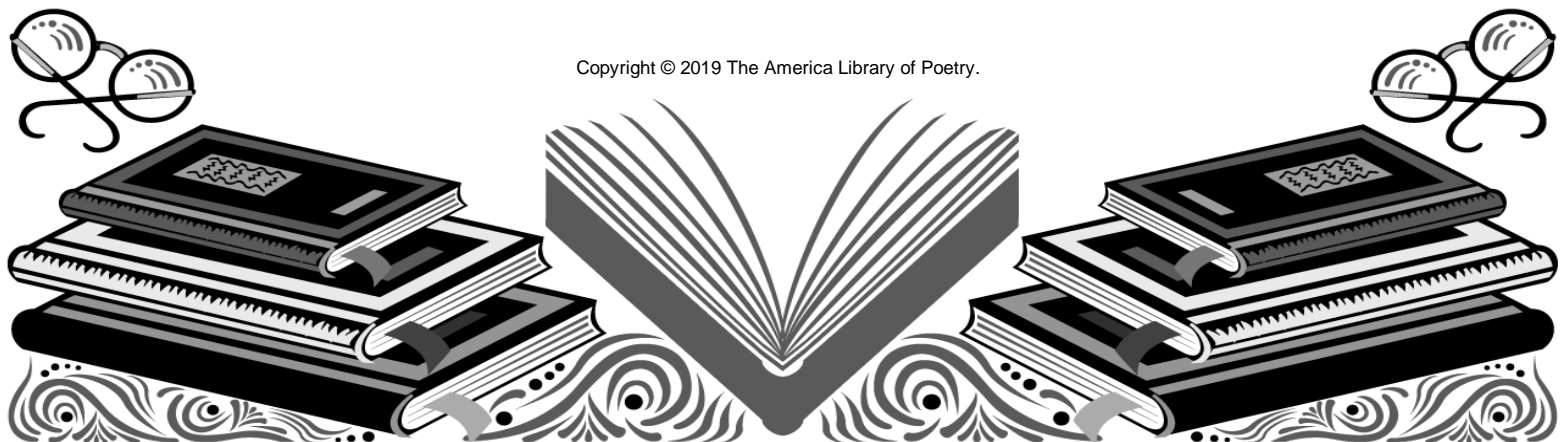
“use ... without crediting the source:”

Definition: To use something that belongs to someone else, and not mention
that it is theirs.

Example: At snack time, you pull out your classmate's snack from your lunchbox
and eat it without saying that it belonged to them.

Taking someone's snack from their lunchbox and eating it at snack time like it was yours is very similar to plagiarizing. Taking words or ideas that you have read or that you have heard on TV or in a song, and writing them down on a piece of paper without also writing down where you found them, even if it is not the exact words or ideas, is plagiarism. Although ideas, for example, cannot be held in your hands, it is still considered stealing and should be taken very seriously.

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Practical Methods For Keeping Work Original: A Guide for Elementary School Students

There are many methods students can use to make sure their work is original. Andrea Hayward, Associate Editor and Global Community Engagement at *Editage Insights*, provides three, which include learning how correctly handle quotations, learning how to properly paraphrase, and learning how to accurately summarize.

How to Use Quotations: Quoting is the use of phrases or sentences word for word from a source. In this case, it is very important that quotation marks (“”) be used. The first quotation mark goes directly before the first word of the phrase, and the second quotation mark goes directly after the last word of the phrase. Depending on the expectations of a teacher, the name of the author and a page number, if applicable, should always be included in parenthesis directly after the quotation (that is called an in-text citation).

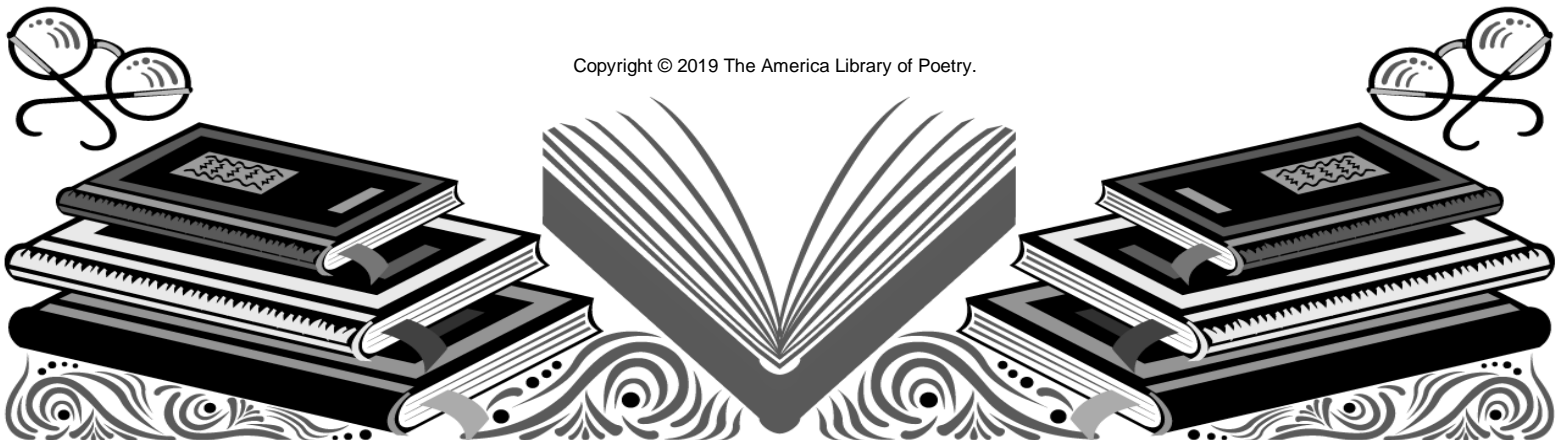
Ex. (Author’s Last Name 100)

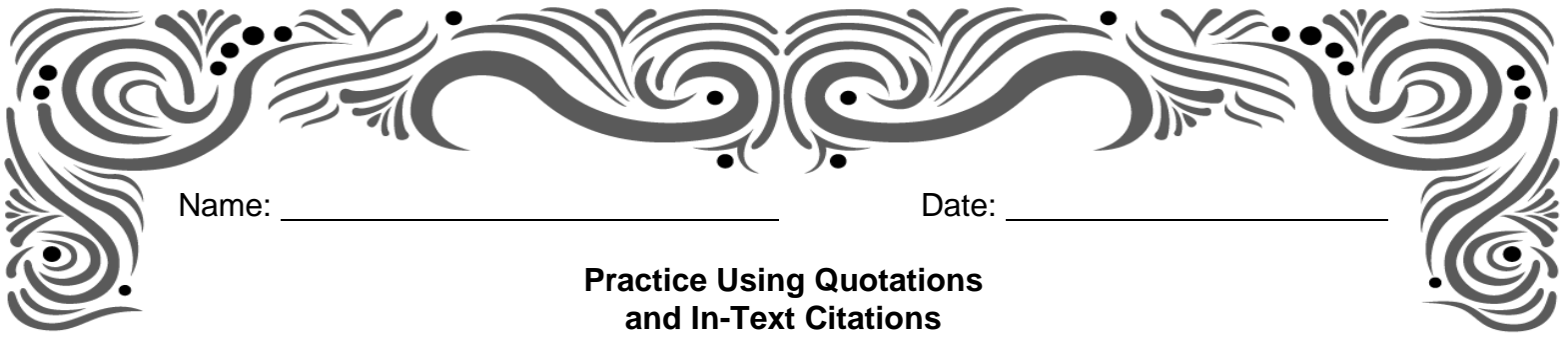
How to Paraphrase: Paraphrasing refers to rewriting the original text in one’s own words. It should be of similar length to the original text and should convey the same meaning, but the words should not be the same. This does not mean one should simply find synonyms (words that mean the same thing) to change certain words here and there throughout the original text, as that would still be considered plagiarism. One should try to make their words, as well as sentence structures, different than that of the original text. As direct quotations do, a proper paraphrase also requires an in-text citation at the end of the text in parenthesis, since the ideas in the paraphrase still belong to the original author.

How to Summarize: Summarizing refers to rewriting the original text in one’s own words in shorter form than the original text. It essentially gives a quick overview of the main points in the original text without going into detail. In a summary, it is important to refer to the original author by their last name to remind a reader that they are reading a summary. Depending on the length of the original text and summary, this can sometimes be done more than one time as a continued reminder.

Below, you will find worksheets that your students may use to practice proper handling of quotations, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Practice Using Quotations and In-Text Citations

Choose one of your favorite books, or a book you have recently read, to practice using quotations and in-text citations.

Pick a paragraph from the book you chose and write it in the space provided below. Write about why you picked this specific paragraph and what part is your favorite, using a quote directly from the paragraph. Don't forget to use quotation marks around the quotation and include the author's last name and page number at the end of that sentence in parenthesis.

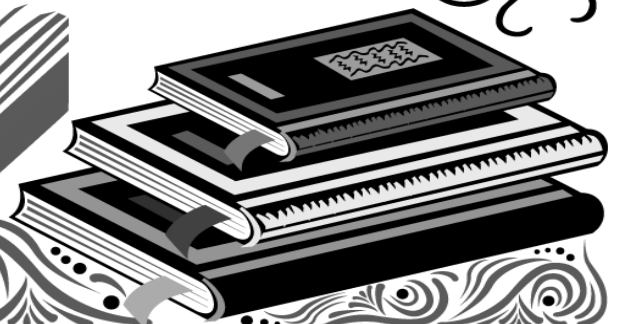
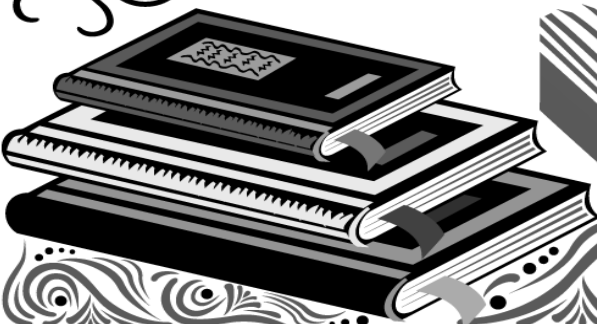
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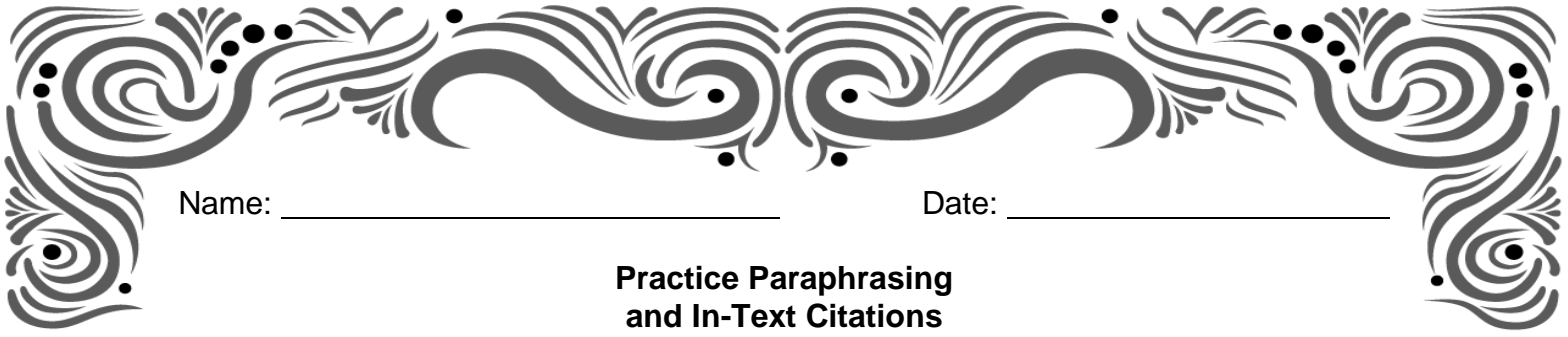
The Paragraph I Chose Says:

My Favorite Part of This Paragraph:



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Practice Paraphrasing and In-Text Citations

Using the same book used to practice using quotations, pick a different paragraph and write it in the space provided below.

In the next space, write a paragraph paraphrasing what the original author wrote. A paraphrase should be similar in length to the original text and have the same meaning, but should use different words. Don't forget to include the author's last name and page number at the end of the paragraph in parenthesis.

Book Title: _____

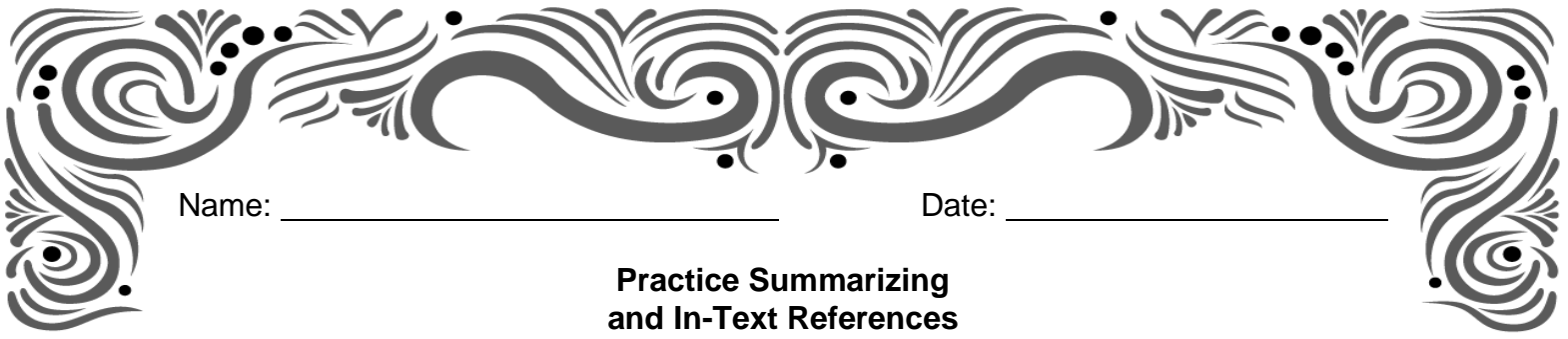
The Paragraph I Chose Says:

My Paraphrase of This Paragraph:



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Practice Summarizing and In-Text References

Using the same book used to practice quotations and paraphrasing, pick a different paragraph and write it in the space provided below. In the next space, write a summary of the paragraph you chose. A summary should be shorter than the original text and make a reference to the last name of the author, so the reader knows what they are reading is a summary.

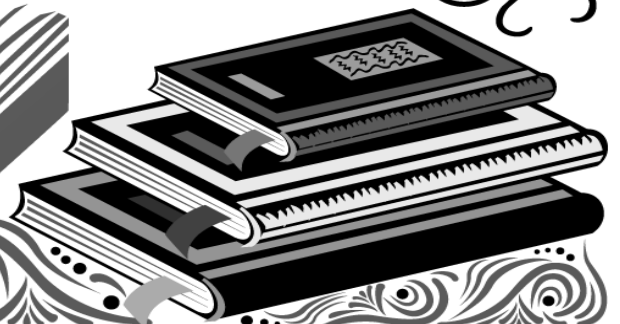
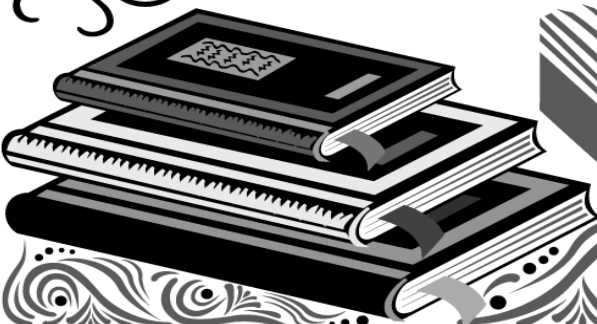
Book Title: _____

The Paragraph I Chose Says:

My Summary of This Paragraph:



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Works Cited

Hayward, Andrea. "INFOGRAPHIC: 3 Techniques to avoid plagiarism in your research paper." *Editage Insights*, Cactus Communications, 2019, <https://www.editage.com/insights/3-techniques-to-avoid-plagiarism-in-your-research-paper>. Accessed 16 May 2019.

"Plagiarize." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarizing. Accessed 16 May 2019.