

Unit 1 Discussion: Paraphrasing Practice

In order to practice the skill of paraphrasing, please follow the following steps:

1. Carefully and slowly read the original words by Kozol (see table below).
2. Read the student's attempt at paraphrasing Kozol.
3. Now respond to the following questions:
 - a. Did the student properly cite Kozol?
 - b. Did the student properly paraphrase what Kozol said?
 - c. Highlight the words/phrases that are exactly like or closely similar to the words used by Kozol. How many words fall into this category? Please keep a count of them.
 - d. If you were the instructor reading this student's paraphrase of Kozol, what grade would you give the student? What would you tell the student about the quality of their paraphrasing ability? Is this student plagiarizing? Explain why, or why not?
4. Now read what the second student wrote that is under the heading "**Second Student's Paraphrase of Kozol.**" Then, respond to the following questions:
 - a. How many words/phrases are exactly like or closely similar to the words originally written by Kozol?
 - b. What is the second student doing now that was not present before?
 - c. If you were the instructor reading what is now written in red, what grade would you give the second student? What would you tell the student about the quality of their paraphrasing ability?

Original (from Kozol, 1978)*

When nearly half of all adult black citizens in the United States are coming out of public schools without the competence to understand the antidote instructions on a chemical container, instructions on a medicine bottle, or the books and journalistic pieces which might render them both potent and judicious in a voting booth, who can pretend that literacy is not political? When over one third of the adult population is unable to read editorial opinions, to buy a car, to purchase health insurance, who can persist in the belief that literacy is not political? When the government itself has been elected by exclusion of one third of the electorate, when the third which is excluded is the third which also gets the most deficient nutriment, least adequate health care, poorest housing, and which has an infant death rate twice that of the middle class, and when the government has actively engaged in the reduction of all services and funds which might at least alleviate the pain if not the cause of so much needless subjugation, who can still adhere to the belief that this is not political?

Student's paraphrase of Kozol

Kozol (1985) reported that nearly half of all adult African American citizens in the United States leave public schools with the ability to understand the antidote instructions on chemical containers, or a medicine bottle, or in a voting booth. More than one third of the adult population, he wrote, is unable to read editorial opinions, to buy a car, or to purchase health insurance. Given that the government has been elected by exclusion of one third of the electorate, the third that gets the most deficient nutriment, lease adequate health care, poorest housing, and that has an infant death rate twice that of the middle class, Kozol wants to know how anyone can still adhere to the belief that this is not political (p. 92).

*Kozol, J. (1985). *Illiterate America*. New York, NY: New American Library.

In the above student example, although the student did cite Kozol and provided a page number for the direct quote at the end, because of our conventions of quoting and paraphrasing authors, **the student has in fact plagiarized Kozol**. The student's words could not have been written without Kozol at his elbow (or in this case, on the left half of the computer screen) and without directly copying what is in the left box straight into the right box.

In fact, the student should instead read Kozol critically and ask of the paragraph, "What is Kozol's point here? Does his argument hold water? Where did he get those numbers? Does he overly simplify the issues here? Or has Kozol, someone with considerable authority on education reform, identified an important relation between illiteracy and government power?"

The first rule to remember is that **changing a preposition or two, removing a couple of words, adding a word, or substituting a synonym does not count as paraphrasing**. Moreover, if the student chooses to incorporate Kozol's ideas into a text, he or she, should either use quotation marks to indicate borrowed passages — **or write a correct paraphrase of the information**.

Read the following student's example of **properly paraphrasing** the words of Kozol.

Second Student's Paraphrase of Kozol

Kozol (1985), writing at a time when the Reagan administration was beginning to demolish the assumptions of the Great Society, argued that illiteracy is in part an effect of the government's apathy toward a block of voters who are unable to take part in the political process in the first place. Kozol suggested that the direct result of the government's lack of concern toward the illiterate is that millions of Americans cannot read prescriptions or the newspaper and endure many of the harshest social problems in America. That direct relationship Kozol calls "political." Yet are we to believe that policymakers are that shrewd, that calculating?