

*This brief handout from the Writing Center at Blinn College outlines a strategy, memorable by the acronym "PIE," that your students might find helpful in structuring arguments about literature.*

## Placing Quotations in Context: Using P. I. E.

After you've chosen the most effective quotes to use and have smoothly incorporated them into your own writing, your work is not done. You also need to make sure to properly explain the significance of the quote. Why is this particular statement or idea important? How does it relate to your argument? Your audience may not see the connection between the quote and your argument, so you need to make it clear.

Whenever you are incorporating a source into a paragraph, simply remember P.I.E: point, illustration, explanation.

**POINT:** The point is the statement that you are trying to make in a particular paragraph. Before you even use a quote, you need to state your point so that the audience will be familiar with the idea that your source is supposed to support. Stating your point prepares your audience for the quote that follows.

**ILLUSTRATION:** The illustration is the quotation or paraphrase of information from your source that follows the statement of your point. Think of your sources as proving or showing the evidence for your argument or point. You do not want to quote a source unless you are sure that the quote illustrates or supports your argument.

**EXPLANATION:** Your explanation is just that—an explanation of how the quotation you've just used relates to and supports your point. You should never leave a quotation hanging—always follow it with an explanation of its relevance and importance to your argument.

The following is an example found in *The Little, Brown Handbook*, page 678:

Kate Chopin builds irony into every turn of "The Story of an Hour." **[point]** For example, Mrs. Mallard, the central character, finds joy in the death of her husband, whom she loves, because she anticipates "the long procession of years that would belong to her absolutely" (23).

**[illustration]** One would not expect a woman who loves her husband to look forward to life without him. **[explanation]**