

Quote Analysis Worksheet

An author can describe important events in a story by telling you about them:

Sometimes what a character says (and how he says it) is just as important as what happens. It can tell us what the person talking is like, and what has happened in the past or will happen in the future.

You can learn a lot from a quote by explaining it in four parts, called a "quote analysis:"

1. Write the quote and the page it comes from. Put it in quotation marks.
2. Explain who said those words, and to whom they were talking (One to two sentences.)
3. Paraphrase the quote.
That means put it in different words that mean the same thing. Don't use quotation marks because quotation marks mean you are writing exactly the words that were said (two to four sentences.)
4. Explain what this quote tells you about this character or the plot of the story. What kind of person would say these things? Why would they say it? What would they have to know, or be thinking about, to say it? (five to ten sentences)

“God is the color of water. Water doesn't have a color.”

“I asked her if I was black or white. She replied “You are a human being. Educate yourself or you'll be a nobody!”

“There's such a big difference between being dead and alive, I told myself, the greatest gift that anyone can give anyone else is life. And the greatest sin a person can do to another is to take away that life. Next to that, all the rules and religions in the world are secondary; mere words and beliefs that people choose to believe and kill and hate by. My life won't be lived that way, and neither, I hope, will my children's.”

“Sometimes without conscious realization, our thoughts, our faith, our interests are entered into the past. We talk about other times, other places, other persons, and lose our living hold on the present. Sometimes we think if we could just go back in time we would be happy. But anyone who attempts to reenter the past is sure to be disappointed.

“You want me to talk about my family and here I been dead to them for fifty years” (Ch. 1, p. 1)

“She and my father brought a curious blend of Jewish-European and African-American distrust and paranoia into our house” (Ch. 4, p. 28).

“She couldn't stand racists of either color” (Ch. 4, p. 30)

“As a grown man, I understand now, understand how her Christian principles and trust in God kept her going through all her life's battles” (Ch. 4, p. 33).

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“Mommy staggered about in an emotional stupor for nearly a year. But while she weebled and wobbled and leaned, she did not fall” (Ch. 16, p. 163)

“The man died without a penny, yet his children grew up to graduate from college, to become doctors, professors, teachers, and professionals all (Ch. 24, p. 251).

“She wipes her memory instantly and with purpose; it's a way of preserving herself” (Ch. 25, p. 271)

“In running from her past, Mommy has created her own nation, a rainbow coalition . . . “ (Ch. 25, p. 277).

“ ‘Why do you cry in church?’ I asked her one day after service.

‘Because God makes me happy.’

‘Then why cry?’

‘I'm crying ‘cause I'm happy. Anything wrong with that?’

‘No’ I said, but there was, because happy people did not seem to cry like she did. Mommy's tears seemed to come from somewhere else, a place far away, a place inside her that she never let any of us children visit, and even as a boy I felt there was pain behind them. I thought it was because she wanted to be black like everyone else in church, because maybe God liked black people better...”

“...since I was a little boy, she had always wanted me to go. She was always sending me off on a bus someplace, to elementary school, to camp, to relatives in Kentucky, to college. She pushed me away from her just as she'd pushed my elder siblings away when we lived in New York, literally shoving them out the front door when they left for college. ”

“Sometimes it seemed like the truth was a bandy-legged soul who dashed from one side of the world to the other and I could never find him.”

“My parents were non-materialistic. They believed that money without knowledge was worthless, that education tempered with religion was the way to climb out of poverty in America, and over the years they were proven right.”