

Finding Textual Evidence

Textual Evidence

In an analytical essay, textual evidence is evidence that is pulled from the text to support the points in your paper. Typically, textual evidence consists of direct quotations from the text.

In this lesson, the sample outline will be used as a model to show you how to find textual evidence to support your points.

Prompt: What is the symbolic meaning of the conch shell in <i>Lord of the Flies</i> ? How does its meaning evolve throughout the book? Why is the conch shell an important symbol in the book?	
Section of Essay	My Notes
Thesis Statement What do you plan to prove in your paper? How do you plan to prove it? Write one sentence that states this without using the pronoun <i>I</i> .	By studying how Golding uses the conch shell as a symbol for rules and order throughout <i>Lord of the Flies</i> , one can see how he shows the fragility of civilization.
Body: Section 1 What is the symbolic meaning of the conch shell in <i>Lord of the Flies</i> ? What evidence will you use to support your point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conch shell symbolizes rules and order<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Its role in calling meetings○ Its role in Ralph's election○ Its role in maintaining order during meetings
Body: Section 2 How does the meaning of the conch shell evolve? What evidence will you use to support your point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The conch shell and Jack's rebellion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Dancing scene; Ralph is afraid to blow the shell○ Piggy's continual use of the conch shell to check Jack when he begins to rebel• The destruction of the conch shell<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Roger destroys the shell when he kills Piggy○ Jack's reaction correlates to the destruction of the shell (joy at the end of the shell and Ralph's leadership)
Body: Section 3 Why is the conch shell an important symbol in the book? What evidence will you use to support your point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Importance of the conch shell<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The conch shell is a symbol to both the reader and the boys○ It shows the fragility of rules and order in civilization

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The rules and order people agree to follow in civilization can be broken as easily as the conch shell
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You can apply the techniques shown here to your own outline.

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In the sample outline, the writer provides notes about moments in the book that demonstrate the point for that section of the body of the essay. For instance, look at the notes from the first section of the body:

- Conch shell symbolizes rules and order
 - Its role in calling meetings
 - Its role in Ralph's election
 - Its role in maintaining order during meetings

In the outline, the main point for this section of the paper is that the conch shell symbolizes rules and order. The writer identifies three moments in the book that demonstrate this. When the writer begins to work on the first draft of the essay, they will need to find textual evidence from these scenes to help demonstrate that the conch shell symbolizes rules and order.

To do this, the writer needs to go to the text and find quotations from these scenes that support the idea that the conch shell symbolizes rules and order.

How do you do this without rereading the entire novel? There are a few different ways to do this.

Approach	Explanation
Search the novel	Since you most likely read an electronic version of the novel, using the search function is a great way to find textual evidence. Open the text, press Ctrl + F and then type in your key word. For example, for this essay, you might search for the word <i>conch</i> .
Review your notes	As you read the novel, you most likely took notes or completed tasks, such as reading guides or constructed responses, that required you to write about the text. Pull out these notes. See what textual evidence you already gathered that might support your points, or use these notes to help you determine which sections of the book to revisit. For instance, you might notice that your notes discuss Ralph's election in Chapter 1. Therefore, you

	know to go back to Chapter 1 to find that scene in the book.
Read a summary of the novel	You can find many summaries of the text by doing a quick Internet search. These summaries can help jog your memory about when a key event happened. Once you know, you can more easily find the exact place in the book where this scene occurs.

These are some shortcuts to finding the scenes in the book that will most likely have the textual evidence you need.

Noting Textual Evidence

Now that you know how to search for textual evidence, you need to know how to record your textual evidence. One of the best ways to do this is to incorporate it directly into your outline. For each subpoint in your outline, you can add additional subpoints with the textual evidence. Take a look at this example from the first body paragraph section.

- Conch shell symbolizes rules and order
 - Its role in calling meetings
 - ““We can use [the conch] to call the others. Have a meeting.”” (20)
 - ““And another thing. We ought to have more rules. Where the conch is, that’s a meeting.”” (58)
 - Its role in Ralph’s election
 - “... the clamor changed from a general wish for a chief to an election by acclaim of Ralph himself. ... there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch.” (28)
 - Its role in maintaining order during meetings
 - ““I’ll give the conch to the next person to speak. He can hold it when he’s speaking.”” (45)
 - “Piggy, partly recovered, pointed to the conch in Ralph’s hands, and Jack and Simon fell silent.” (47)
 - “Jack held out his hands for the conch and stood up, holding the delicate thing carefully in his sooty hands. ‘I agree with Ralph. We’ve got to have rules and obey them. After all, we’re not savages. We’re English, and the

English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things.'" (58-9)

As you can see, this section of the outline now includes textual evidence for each of the subpoints. The textual evidence includes the full, direct quotation in the text as well as the page number where this quotation can be found. The page number is important since you will need it to correctly cite the evidence in your paper. Make sure to include it when you note your textual evidence.

Although including direct quotations isn't a required part of the outline, it is a great way to start gathering evidence for your paper. This way, when you begin to work on the first draft, you will already have a bank of textual evidence to use as a starting point.

Summary

Finding textual evidence during the outline step is a great way to get a head start on your first draft. When you search for textual evidence, make sure to find relevant quotations from the text that support your point, write down the entire quotation, and cite the page number.