

Academic Misconduct Guide

Imagine you are writing an essay on Adolf Hitler; maybe you are answering a question that asks you to consider the role individuals play in history. You want to use the opening lines from Joachim Fest's 1973 biography of Hitler (translated into English 1974) in some way, as you feel they are powerful lines and that his ideas about Hitler's significance are important.

In this guide we will illustrate examples of how this passage should not be used. Indeed the first examples given below (1a to 1d) constitute forms of **academic misconduct**, as in these cases the writer is drawing ideas and language from somewhere else without adequately crediting that source. The usual way that we credit sources is through using citations (otherwise called references or footnotes) and quotation marks (quotation marks tell the reader that language comes from somewhere else). The second set of examples (2a to 2d) suggest how these passages could be rewritten to avoid the problems of the first set.

The passage that you wish to use is this one:

'History records no phenomenon like him. Ought we to call him "great"? No one evoked so much rejoicing, hysteria, and expectation of salvation as he; no one so much hate. No one else produced, in a solitary course lasting only a few years, such incredible accelerations in the pace of history. No one else so changed the state of the world and left behind such a wake of ruins as he did. It took a coalition of almost all the world powers to wipe him from the face of the earth in a war lasting nearly six years, to kill him—to quote an army officer of the German resistance—"like a mad dog".¹

The passages of text that are highlighted below are cases of academic misconduct that are easily spotted, as they are words taken directly from Fest's original. It is likely that these highlighted passages would be detected by your tutors and 'Turnitin', the electronic plagiarism detection software used by this university and many others.

¹ Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Bad Practice

1A: Using somebody else's language without sufficient acknowledgement

Nobody has evoked so much rejoicing, hysteria, and expectation of salvation as Hitler.¹

1. Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Explanation: This is clear case of what we might call 'verbatim plagiarism'. The language from the original is copied almost word for word. There is a citation/reference, but while this reference tells the reader that the idea is drawn from somewhere else, the reference itself does not tell the reader that the words are the same as in the original (remember that your reader may not have read the original text). You have to make clear distinctions between what is your idea, and what is an idea drawn from somewhere else.

1B: Using someone else's idea without acknowledgment

Hitler was such a unique figure in history that we might well call him great.

Explanation: This is considered plagiarism as while the sentence is not identical to anything in the original, the student is still taking someone else's idea – that Hitler was unique and one of history's 'great men' – without citing or referencing it.

1C: Inadequate paraphrasing

Nobody in history generated so much excitement, joy and expectation as Hitler. Nobody else did so much to produce such accelerations in the pace of history in only a few years as he did.¹

1. Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Explanation: This also is considered academic misconduct. The author has tried to paraphrase (put it their own words) Fest's original language, and they have included the proper citation/reference. But the issue here is that the paraphrase is inadequate: only a few words have been changed ('excitement' for 'rejoicing'; 'joy' for 'hysteria'; 'expectation' rather than 'expectation of salvation', etc), and little effort has been made to restate Fest's idea and sentence in new, completely different, words. Paraphrasing means articulating someone else's idea in a completely new way, with new words and a new sentence structure.

1D: Confusing and inadequate referencing

Many of Hitler's most recent biographers have approached their subject from the view that history is rarely made by great men and great individuals. The Hitler presented in Ian Kershaw's two-volume biography, for instance, is a largely marginal and peripheral figure: Kershaw is more interested in understanding how Nazism, and the Hitler phenomenon, were products of structures and ideologies that had deep roots in German history. But the argument can still be made for 'great man' history. Nobody in the twentieth century evoked the kind of passions that Hitler did. No one figure changed the shape of the world, and accelerated history as quickly as he did.¹

1. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1939: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 1998), *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis* (London: Penguin, 2001).

Explanation: There are several problems here. The footnote is in the wrong place. The reader is led to believe that the last two sentences are based on ideas drawn from Kershaw's book, when they are not – they are Fest's. The paraphrase of Fest is inadequate: some words have been changed, but the language and sentence structure is largely the same. These problems may have arisen because the student forgot to footnote Fest. They might also stem from poor note taking: their notes did not adequately distinguish what was Kershaw from what was Fest, and when noting Fest's work, they forgot to point out that the language they were copying down was Fest's.

Good Practice

Here are some suggestions for how you can avoid the mistakes made above.

2A

In his 1973 biography of Hitler, Joachim Fest writes that nobody in history has 'evoked so much rejoicing, hysteria, and expectation of salvation' as the Nazi dictator.¹

1. Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Explanation: Here the reader is made aware that the author of the essay is not only using Fest's idea, but his language too. This is because we have a citation and the passage from Fest is placed in quotation marks.

2B

In the striking opening lines of his 1973 biography, Fest writes that Hitler was such a unique figure in history that we might go so far as to call him 'great'.¹

1. Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Explanation: Here the author has paraphrased Fest's opening lines. They have also added a citation so that the reader is aware that the idea is drawn from Fest.

2C

Fest begins his book by explaining why Hitler is a figure who continues to generate such intense debate. For Fest, Hitler generated hate and admiration in equal measure in his own time. He was the key figure of the twentieth-century: his rule shaped the lives of millions of people, and his Nazi regime left behind devastating and far-reaching short- and long-term legacies.¹

1. Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Explanation: Here the author of the essay has made more effort to paraphrase Fest. They have articulated what Fest was trying to say in the opening lines of the book, but they have done so by using their own language.

2D

Many of Hitler's most recent biographers have approached their subject from the view that history is rarely made by great men and great individuals. The Hitler presented in Ian Kershaw's two-volume biography, for instance, is a largely marginal and peripheral figure: Kershaw is more interested in understanding how Nazism, and the Hitler phenomenon, were products of structures and ideologies that had deep roots in German history.¹ But other historians emphasise the role 'great men' play in history. In the opening lines of his biography of Hitler, Joachim Fest points out that few figures in the twentieth century evoked the kind of passions that Hitler did. According to Fest, this was an individual who 'changed the shape of the world', and accelerated 'the pace of history'.²

1. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1939: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 1998), *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis* (London: Penguin, 2001).
2. Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 3.

Explanation: Here the addition of the second footnote helps make the distinction between Kershaw and Fest clearer. The section on Fest has also been re-written so that the reader is aware that the ideas are taken from Fest; the use of quotation marks also makes it clear that Fest's language is being used.