Paraphrase

Definition of Paraphrase

Often when we hear news stories and watch television shows, we want to tell our families, friends, and colleagues about what, how, and why something happened. In fact, we recount the story, its main characters, and events in our own words. This technique is called paraphrasing, which is to express an idea or somebody's message in our own words, by maintaining the meaning of the original material. Paraphrase is a Greek word, *paraphrasis*, which means "to tell in other words." Simply, it is to restate a statement in different words than the original text, while keeping the meaning and sense of the original source the same.

Paraphrase and Summary

Both summarizing and paraphrasing use similar actions by involving almost the same processes. However, their objectives are different. Summary aims at condensing the original source into a shorter form. Paraphrase has no concern with length, but is a rewording or restating or the original source in different words, keeping the length or word count almost the same.

Examples of Paraphrase in Literature

Example #1: *Romeo & Juliet* (By Robert Burns)

"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she …

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night."

Paraphrase: But please wait and see the light from that window. It is the east, and my love Juliet is the sun. Come up beautiful sun, kill the jealous moon that is already sick and pale due to grief, as Juliet is more beautiful than the moon ... The brightness of Juliet's cheeks would surpass the brightness of stars, like the sun's light outshines the light of a lamp. If her eyes were in the sky, they would be so bright through the spaces that birds might start singing, considering it was day light.

Example #2: *The Sun Rising* (By John Donne)

"Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows and through curtains call on us?...

Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere."

Paraphrase: You nosy old stupid busybody! The sun, you obey no normal rules – why are you waking us up like this, interfering with our personal life by entering through the windows and curtains? ... Go ahead and shine on us – while doing so you will shine everywhere. This bed is the center of the entire universe, around which you revolve, and the walls of our room are like a sphere, which holds you in the heavens.

Example #3: *Pride & Prejudice* (By Jane Austen)

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."

Paraphrase: Everyone agrees on this point, that a prosperous man needs to

Example #4: *Macbeth* **(By William Shakespeare)**

"Whence is that knocking?—
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here! Ha, they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

Paraphrase: Where is this knocking coming from? Why does every noise frighten me? Whose hands are these plucking out my eyes? Will the ocean's water wash the blood from my hands? No, instead these hands will change the color of the water from green to red.

Function of Paraphrase

The paraphrasing technique allows writers to change the original text, so that it does not look the same, yet without changing its meaning. Effective paraphrasing could help avoid the risk of plagiarism. There are many functions of this literary technique; first, it helps the readers to understand what they have read, especially when the [syntax](#) and [diction](#) of a writer look foreign and complex to the reader. Secondly, it could direct the attention of the reader toward the tone of the text and its significant details. Finally, since it clears up the meaning of the text, it helps readers to generate different questions from the paraphrasing text, such as when, what, and why something occurred.