CHAPTER 7

Avoiding Plagiarism and Documenting Sources

The Lessons of Chapter 7

This chapter addresses the important topic of plagiarism by walking students through the steps of how to cite sources appropriately. Through instruction on proper attribution, Chapter 7 extends the idea from Chapter 5 that research is a conversation. Chapter 7 also provides students with an explanation of documentation style, concrete strategies for citing sources, a mini-style manual, in which they can learn to cite all types of sources they might use in their written and visual projects, and a student paper by Stephanie Parker that uses digital sources. We offer guidance in MLA documentation style, as well as a table explaining the range of documentation styles used by various disciplines.

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: BEGIN WITH THE CHAPTER PREVIEW QUESTIONS

Have an open discussion about these questions. Ask students to define plagiarism in their own words and to provide hypothetical examples. The articulation of shared anxieties or questions will create an atmosphere of learning and inquiry that will help students develop best practices as future scholars.

TEACHING THE CHAPTER’S OPENING IMAGE: JUSTIN CONE REMIX

We open the chapter with Justin Cone’s film Building on the Past in order to provide a model for a visual argument that is paradoxically unique and built entirely out of existing footage from the Prelinger Archive of public domain film. You can discuss the screenshots with your students in order to introduce the idea that originality always occurs in a vacuum. Instead, “Creativity always builds on the past” so that
while students can be proud of their original, finished papers, they should be sure to acknowledge the ideas and words of those who came before them.

**Teaching Rhetorical Imitation and Intellectual Property**

Rather than simply repeat the mandate that students not plagiarize because it is wrong to do so, Chapter 7 addresses the fact that it is often difficult for students to understand the differences between borrowing an idea, imitating a style, and stealing intellectual property. While lifting a chunk of one person’s text and representing it as your own words is clearly plagiarism, what about summarizing an idea you heard somewhere (in a class, lecture, etc.)? These are difficult questions and the answers are not always obvious. We recommend that you have a straightforward discussion with your students about plagiarism and explain how it is better for them to ask you if they are confused rather than to accidentally take credit for someone’s ideas, especially given the consequences at most institutions.

**WORKING WITH THE WEBSITE FOR AVOIDING UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM**

Have students go to http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision/234a and read Doris Kearns Goodwin’s short essay “How I Caused That Story,” about how she was charged with accidentally plagiarizing another scholar’s work. Discuss: What do they think of her rationale? Do they think she plagiarized at all if it was done so unintentionally? If a famous Pulitzer Prize-winning historian can unintentionally plagiarize her sources, what about the rest of us? How can we insure that we avoid trespassing on the intellectual property of others while creating layered, multi-faceted research papers in which we see represented many more voices than our own?

**WRITING ACTIVITY FOR AVOIDING UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM**

From ancient Greece through the Renaissance, the classical technique of *Imitatio*, or rhetorical imitation of others, was thought to be the best method for learning. Even today, we ask our students to imitate the style and choices of student sample work throughout the chapters of *Envision*. They might not copy down the student writing
word for word as they did in ancient times, but our students work with models in
order to shape their own style in their writing.

Yet because of the academic trade in ideas, we need to also instruct students in the
art of respecting and acknowledging the work of others. We can reassure them that
documentation actually builds their ethos since they, like Justin Cone, build on the work
of the past. The purpose of this part of Chapter 7 is to help you teach students that
we all need to cite others when their words and ideas have helped to create our final
work.

The research log from Chapter 5 is an ideal tool to accomplish this balance. The
research log can serve as a road map of a student’s thought process and a record of
sources. Have your students compose regular, weekly entries in their research logs.
Look at Michael Rothenberg’s research log on page 210 as an example. Your role as
a teacher can be to collect and comment on these research logs every week, helping
students learn effective scholarly practices.

WORKING WITH THE AT A GLANCE BOX ON AVOIDING UNINTENTIONAL
PLAGIARISM

Ask students to exchange their paper drafts with peer review partners and to work
through the categories for documentation in the At a Glance box on page 211. They
can use different colored highlighters if you are in a low-technology classroom or
color code a Word document on laptops. Conclude this class activity with a
discussion of what they learned about documenting sources, what was confusing,
and what strategies they will take with them as writers.

Teaching Understanding Documentation Style

When we teach Chapter 7, we always spend time as a class discussing the table on
page 212. We explain to students that documentation style is not random, and that
they can’t make up their own systems (which many do) because the styles are linked
to ways of communicating knowledge in diverse disciplines. So, for instance, because the
sciences chart the advance of knowledge by date, the date is always cited in APA
style. Because the humanities produce less collaborative work than the sciences and
because people as individuals advance knowledge, MLA style always begins with the
last name of the author. Taking a moment to explain the epistemology of
documentation to students can help them approach proper citation as an intellectual
event rather than an obligation.

**Writing Activity for MLA-Style Works Cited**

Have your students bring their paper drafts and research logs to class. Ask them to
create a list of works cited and works consulted from their log notes and paper
drafts. Have them work with the guidelines on pages 217–224 to check that their
sources are cited correctly throughout the paper.

**Working with the Student Writing: “Soompi and the ‘Honorary Asian’: Shifting Identities in the Digital Age” by Stephanie Parker**

Ask the class to read through the essay, making notes each time a text is referenced
either explicitly or through summary. Then, ask them to make a cast of characters
from Stephanie’s sources. Finally, divide the class into groups and ask each group to
compare Stephanie’s essay to a different student research paper from the Envision
Website. What different kinds of sources are present? How does the documentation
of sources build the *ethos* of the student writer? Which sources would your students
want to go look up and read about? Students should share their results with each
other in their small groups or with the class.

**Breaking the Chapter into Days of the Week**

**Day One (Pages 207–211)**

Begin with a class discussion of the Chapter Preview questions concerning both
definitions and concerns about plagiarism, and read about the history of intellectual
property. Review the practices for avoiding unintentional plagiarism on page 209–
210, and study the research logs on the Envision Website. Have students read Doris
Kearns Goodwin’s article about committing unintentional plagiarism (available on
the Envision Website at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envisoin/234a) and then
have them write up additional points to contribute to the At a Glance on Avoiding
Unintentional Plagiarism on page 211, particularly with regard to images and
multimedia sources.
DAY TWO (PAGES 212–224)
Introduce documentation style as a function of adhering to disciplinary conventions for the construction of knowledge, and review the table on page 212. Discuss how software programs that automatically generate documentation need to be checked by students to make sure the citations are correct. Review the instruction for in-text citations and cross-referencing logic, as well as when to use notes in a paper based on MLA style. Have students complete the writing activity in which they construct MLA-style works cited lists from their notes and logs and then peer review each other’s entries for accuracy using the information on pages 218–224.

DAY THREE (PAGES 224–234)
Turn to the student writing by Stephanie Parker and have students discuss her argument as well as the conventions of documentation demonstrated by her essay and the margin annotations. Have students compare Stephanie’s paper to others on the Envision Website: How does each writer build ethos through documentation? Which sources intrigue the students most? Finally, ask students to review the “Writer’s Process” on page 233 and then work on their own documentation practices, peer reviewing to check if notes are needed or if students have cited sources correctly.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR CHAPTER 7

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MyCompLab Resources for Chapter 7

1. **Seven Rules Wrap-Up**: rules to avoid plagiarism. Find at Resources > Research > Avoiding Plagiarism > MLA > Instruction > Seven Rules Wrap-Up

2. **Writing in Action: How to Avoid Plagiarism**: presentation on how to avoid plagiarism. Find at Resources > Research > Avoiding Plagiarism > Multimedia > Writing in Action: How to Avoid Plagiarism

http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision for expanded assignment guidelines and student projects.
http://www.mycmplab.com for additional general writing and research resources.