

Here is an incomplete list of compositional matters to consider as you prepare the final draft of your essay to submit.

Plot summary. It shouldn't be there at all. Period. You may need to describe briefly a scene or character, but always do so because it introduces or illustrates some specific point you are making in your argument.

Body Paragraphs. Typically a paragraph will have a topic/transition statement toward the beginning, followed by more detailed reasoning and (most likely) some solid "evidence" in the form of specific references to the novel, frequently involving direct quotation. (The paragraphs on pp. 368-69 from Philip Wion's essay would be good models to consider.) In any event, watch out for these common signs of trouble:

- **Beginning/ending paragraphs with quotations.** This sometimes works as a way to introduce a particular topic; more often, though, if you find quotations at the beginnings and endings of paragraphs it suggests that the organization and argument are flawed—these, after all, are usually the places where you need to be most in control of the language, most in control of *your* thinking, *your* argument.
- **Lots of short paragraphs**—say, four or five paragraphs per typescript page. Lots of short paragraphs almost always indicate that the writer is not adequately developing the topics with reference to the primary (or secondary) sources.
- **Over-quotation.** In class we discussed the differences between integrated and separated quotation. The key principle underlying this distinction is that integrated quotation enables writers to maintain their own voices and their own arguments without being "crowded out" by extended quotation from the primary (and sometimes secondary) source. As a result, indented block quotations are rare in well-written essays, especially those that are only 8-10 pages long in the first place. The point here is to feature your writing and your thinking, not just to use your writing to loosely link extended quotations from the sources.

Line editing and documentation.

Make sure that all references to secondary sources—especially direct quotations—are identified within the text by appropriate introductory tags like "**As Meyer puts it**, *Wuthering Heights* is an 'extended critique of British imperialism' (483)." You'll find a handy list of such intro tags in *They Say, I Say*, pp. 43 and 166.

Remember that quotations do not speak for themselves. They are helpful, even necessary, for you to develop your paper, but they always need to be explained in terms of your thinking and your argument.

Please check the accuracy of all quotations. Everything you have placed between quotation marks (or in a block quotation) should be exact, word-for-word as it is in the source. Any modifications should be indicated by brackets or ellipses. (For details, see section 3.7 in the [MLA Handbook](#).)

Please check the punctuation and documentation of direct quotations and of any other source citations. You'll find ample models to consult in the [MLA Handbook](#), 3.7.

The Works Cited Page should be as nearly flawless as you can make it. Please compare your page to the model on MLA p. 321 to make sure you've got the overall format correct; and please proofread each individual citation carefully against the models you'll find in MLA chapter 5.

When you have a complete draft of your essay, and when you have considered and revised the major structural elements (introduction, thesis, paragraph organization and development, etc.), then read the whole essay out loud. If you find yourself tripping over some sentences, make a note in the margin and then go back to see if there is some grammatical or stylistic error.

A few common errors to avoid:

Wuthering Heights is a house; Wuthering Heights is a book.

Respect the lowly apostrophe: "It's seldom we see its proper use."

The author's name is Emily Brontë, not Emily Bronte. I've found it easiest to correct the name in one place (using a "Special Character" in Open Office, and "Symbol" in Word) and then cut-and-paste the correct version as appropriate.

Under no circumstances should underlined and *italic* text appear in the same paper. Choose one and use it exclusively.

Avoid the second-person "you." Instead of writing: "You can see that Lockwood is intrigued by Heathcliff's behavior," say simply "Lockwood is intrigued by Heathcliff's behavior," or "Heathcliff's behavior intrigues Lockwood."

When referring to the author of a source—either primary or secondary—use the author's full name (without any title or degrees) at first mention; at all subsequent mentions use the last name only. E.g. "Philip K. Wion argues that Wuthering Heights exemplifies a compelling psychological dynamic.... Later, Wion focuses specifically on Catherine's dilemma....."

It goes without saying that basic sentence grammar, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, spelling, and so on are as close to flawless as you can make them. A few typographical errors are understandable; multiple errors on each page are unacceptable.