

## How to Integrate Textual Evidence into an MLA-Formatted Essay (Hint: Make a Sandwich)



**The Top Bun is the Introduction to the evidence:** Before adding your evidence, introduce it. You can introduce evidence in several ways:

- Use a signal phrase: Malcolm X argues, ... / In Malcolm X's autobiography, he writes, ... / When Malcolm X claims, ...)
- Integrate textual material directly into your own writing: While most people attain higher education from a college or university, Malcolm X claims that his "homemade education" is more effective (579), as it includes less boola-boola" (580).
- Write a complete sentence that introduces the evidence, followed by a colon and the evidence: Malcolm X realizes that, despite his physical imprisonment, he gains a sense of freedom through literacy: "In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life" (579).

**Protein is the Evidence, and Pickles are Parenthetical Citations:** After introducing the selected evidence, present it. If the source has numbered pages, use a parenthetical citation to cite the page number on which you found the textual material (remember, you must cite all borrowed evidence: language, ideas, information, data, images, charts/graphs, etc.):

- As Malcolm X finds, reading makes him more sensitive to the "deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America" (580).
- Malcolm X explains how he first begins to use the dictionary to teach himself to read and write: "In my painstaking, ragged handwriting, I copied into my tablet everything printed on that first page, down to the punctuation marks" (578).

**The Bottom Bun is the Explanation:** Explain why the evidence is important to your argument. What does it mean in terms of your ideas? How does it connect to your topic sentence and thesis? How does it relate to other evidence you have used? What are the evidence's implications? Your explanation should be at least as long, but preferably longer, than the borrowed evidence, so fully unpack it.

- When Malcolm X claims that reading makes him more sensitive to the "deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America" (580), he does not mean that the Black race is deaf, dumb, and blind. Rather, he is referring to the way those who oppress Blacks are deaf, dumb, and blind to Black Americans' struggles. These oppressors retain their power by ignoring the negative effects of their power on others.
- Malcolm X seems surprised by how much he learns from copying the first page of the dictionary. As he puts it, "I was so fascinated that I went on – I copied the dictionary's next page" (578). His success is predictable because writing notes by hand, and then reading and reviewing those notes is a common and effective learning strategy.