

# Plagiarism

**Plagiarism** is using information from a source without giving credit to its author. This can include taking words, sentences, ideas, or graphics and using as one's own. Students may not intend to plagiarize, but it is a serious offense that can lead to failing grades, being dropped from a class, or even being expelled from Victoria College. All students need to understand plagiarism and how to properly cite all sources.

*The American Heritage College Dictionary* defines plagiarism: 1) "To use or pass off as one's own work." 2) "To appropriate for use as one's own the passages or ideas from another without giving the proper credit" (def. 1-2, 281).

## **Common Knowledge:**

This term refers to information commonly shared with the audience of the paper. This depends on the writer's level of understanding of the topic before beginning research to gain additional information. When a writer shares common knowledge with the reader, such as writing on a topic about Victoria College or the city of Victoria, then the writer can use this general information without citing, but if the writer finds information unknown before beginning the research, this information must be cited.

## **What you Have to Cite:**

- Opinions related to facts
- Direct quotations taken from a print source and used word-for-word
- Paraphrased or summarized information, even though not directly taken word-for-word
- Pictures, graphs, charts, non-recoverable information such as interviews, or audio/video information

When in doubt, cite the source.

## **Avoiding Plagiarism:**

Be very attentive to the details of an assignment:

- ✓ Take notes during research and mark the quote, paraphrase, or summary of the material
- ✓ Keep an accurate list of sources, including all required information for the Works Cited page
- ✓ Keep copies of each source to easily double-check what information comes from each source
- ✓ Credit sources with proper in-text citations, as well as a reference listing in a Works Cited page
- ✓ Signal the reader when using someone else's words:
  - Introduce sources. For example: Austen says, "It is well known..." Use a variety of verbs:

says	evaluates	recommends
addresses	examines	reiterates
analyzes	identifies	reports
contributes	proposes	suggests
defines	questions	thinks

You can also use phrases such as "according to," "based upon," etc.

- ✓ Review the paper and use of documentation carefully with a tutor. Take note of any errors made and create a checklist for future reference when reviewing assignments.

## Plagiarism Practice

Read the selection below, written by George Thomas in *The Real Twain*, published in 2013 by CenGage Publishers in New York. This section was taken from Chapter 2: “The Inspiration Years,” pp. 20-25.

Mark Twain is known as a local color writer since he used the vernacular of the Old South in many of his writings. Perhaps his most famous novel *Tom Sawyer* is a delightful story of a young boy who loves to get into mischief, much to the consternation of his aunt. On the other hand, *Huckleberry Finn* takes a darker tone as it tackles some of the problems of the South during the same timeframe, such as slavery, childhood abuse, and racial tensions. In both novels, Twain uses a southern dialect to express the educational level of the characters, as shown in this conversation between Tom and his Aunt Polly:

“Tom, what in tarnation ails that cat?”

“I don’ know, aunt,” gasped the boy.

“Why, I never seed anything like it. What did make him act so?”

“Deed I don't know, Aunt; cats al’lays act so when they'se having a good time” (qtd. in Thomas 21).

1. Answer this question using one quote from the above information: Where did Mark Twain get his inspiration for his novels?

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2. Answer this question using a paraphrase: Did Twain only write for children?

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3. Summarize the above section.

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4. Prepare a Works Cited entry for this source:

## Answers

1. Where did Mark Twain get his inspiration for his novels?

Mark Twain loved writing about the “Old South” and found his characters came to life when he placed them in this scenario (Thomas 20). George Thomas explains that it was easier for Twain to use his writing to address “. . . some of the problems of the South during the same timeframe, such as slavery, childhood abuse, and racial tensions” (23).

2. Did Twain only write for children?

Many of Twain’s works are suggested reading for adolescents, but in reality, Twain was using his talents as a writer to address some real problems he saw in his society, especially the treatment of the slave Jim (Thomas 22-23).

3. Summarize the above section.

According to George Thomas, Twain bridged the age gap by writing entertaining stories that showed not only his ability to capture the language style but the deeper problems of the setting for his stories. This was Twain’s way of helping to educate America on what he saw as problem areas (20-25).

4. Entry for this source would be on a separate page.

## Work Cited

Thomas, George. “The Inspiration Years.” *The Real Twain*. CenGage Publishers, 2013, pp. 20-25.