



Writing with Sources

A Guide for Students

Third Edition

Gordon Harvey

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Misuse of Sources

Among other tests, in college you face the moral test of arriving at your own ideas and crediting those who have helped you, when it is sometimes tempting to do neither. This chapter concerns some failures to take charge, in your writing with sources, including large and small plagiarisms. These acts, whether arising out of laziness, panic, fatigue, despair, or misjudgment, involve a deception that undermines the trust on which the scholarly community depends; they will therefore land you in trouble in that community.

Moral exhortation has not been shown to prevent these misuses, perhaps because most students don't think themselves capable, beforehand, of such wrongdoing, and fall only unwittingly into misuse of sources. Given this, however, it can only help at least to know the different forms such wrongdoing can take, along with the situations in which it occurs and the habits and attitudes that make it more and less likely. Unsurprisingly, the different misuses of sources described here correlate with the different roles of sources defined in Chapter 1.

3.1 Plagiarism

In everyday conversation, the fact that some of our thoughts and phrases originate with others is treated casually. The fact is taken more seriously in scholarly conversation, where what may seem like name-dropping to outsiders is actually giving credit. In scholarly *writing*, when you are making a careful demonstration—the credibility of which depends on a careful distinguishing between what is yours and what is another's—the fact is taken very seriously indeed.

Plagiarism is the act of passing off the information, ideas, or words of another as your own, by failing to acknowledge their source—an act of lying, cheating, and stealing. *Plagiarus* means “kidnapper” in Latin; in antiquity, *plagiarii* were pirates who sometimes stole children. When you plagiarize, as several commentators have observed, you steal the brainchild of another.¹ Because you also claim that it's your own brainchild, however, and use it to get credit for work you haven't really done, you also lie and cheat. You lie to your instructor and other readers of your work, and you cheat both your source of fair recognition for his or her work and your fellow students who have completed the same assignment without plagiarizing.

In a recent study of more than 60,000 undergraduates, nearly 40% admitted to engaging in plagiarism at least once,² but incidents vary in seriousness and in circumstance. Many students have at some point in their careers obviously or lazily incorporated a few phrases from a source, or simply absorbed a basic idea from a source that should probably have been cited. In such cases, the plagiarized material represents an insignificant contribution to the paper in question. When

1. See for example John Ciardi, *Good Words to You* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 225; and Lance Morrow, “Kidnapping the Brain Children,” *Time*, December 3, 1990, 126.

2. Donald McCabe, “Cheating Among College and University Students: A North American Perspective,” *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, no. 1 (2005): 1–11.

more substantial sections are involved, occasionally a student has been confused about the rules of acknowledgment. At the other end of the scale is the student who cold-bloodedly plagiarizes entire sections or a whole paper because he or she doesn't care about the course and is unwilling to put in the time.

Most often, however, the plagiarist knows the rules and has started out with good intentions but hasn't left enough time to do the work that the assignment requires. Perhaps the student had even downloaded sources from the Internet earlier, only to find later that the sources answer all of the interesting questions on the topic, or that he or she doesn't understand the material well enough to come up with the kind of paper that the assignment seems to want. The student has become desperate, is too embarrassed to get help or ask for another extension, and just wants the whole thing over with.

At this point, in one common scenario, the student gradually drifts over the moral line into plagiarism, getting careless while taking notes on a source or incorporating notes into a draft. The source's words and ideas blend and blur into those of the student, who at this point has neither the time nor the inclination to resist the blending and blurring. In another common scenario, the student panics and appropriates sections from one or more secondary sources or from another student's work—copying from the source directly and occasionally rephrasing a sentence, or closely paraphrasing the source without providing any citation—hoping to get away with it just this one time.

From the viewpoint of the school or college, the gradual line-crossing is no more acceptable than the sudden line-crossing. In both cases, the student is aware that what he or she is doing is wrong and chooses to continue rather than asking for more time or help, or accepting a lower grade for unoriginal but honestly cited work. The consequences of the discovered plagiarism are of course far worse than this (see Box I), and search engines and plagiarism checkers have made discovering it much easier.

[I] DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES OF MISUSE

Minor violations are sometimes handled by the course instructor, who may fail the paper or require that the student rewrite it. For more serious cases, the student or students involved will receive a failing grade in the course; in addition, most institutions require instructors to forward such cases to a disciplinary committee for a hearing.

These committees, which may have student members, are typically thorough and fair. The accused is usually entitled to counsel and advice, has the right to write a statement and appear in person before the committee, and may appeal the decision. The lightest penalties for students found guilty involve a period of probation and a reeducation seminar, in addition to a failing grade in the course. More common is a period of suspension or even permanent expulsion.

This can be costly in the short run, in terms of lost tuition, and even more so in the long run: a disciplinary action that involves sources usually results in a permanent mark on the student's record. Most professional schools, graduate schools, and scholarships also require colleges to report any such infractions in their letters of recommendation, and require students to report them in their applications.

This is not to speak of the emotional cost—the process of being discovered or accused is harrowing, and not only a serious distraction from learning for the student but a cause of pain and embarrassment for the family.

3.2 Forms of Plagiarism

Plagiarism can occur in any kind of paper or presentation, from a short problem set or response paper to a long research paper or thesis. More common than wholesale copying, especially in longer papers, is piecemeal or "mosaic" plagiarism, in which a student mixes words or ideas of a source with his or her own words and ideas, or mixes uncited words and ideas from several sources into a pastiche, or mixes properly cited uses of a source with improperly or uncited uses. At any point in any paper, however, plagiarism usually takes one of the following forms:

(a) **Uncited data or information:** If you read p. 37 of this book for a paper you are writing on plagiarism in American colleges, and then you say in your paper that nearly 40% of undergraduates claim to have plagiarized, and you don't cite this booklet (p. 37), you are plagiarizing information that is not common knowledge. You need to cite such information, again, even when it isn't part of your main argument—when it appears in a "background" section of a paper or in accounts of previous work done on the topic. Your citation must accurately reflect your process: if you claim that you found the information about academic dishonesty in the 2005 journal article by McCabe itself (which you have not read), instead of as cited in *this* volume, you are misleading your reader and possibly embarrassing yourself (see Box F).

(b) **An uncited idea, whether a specific claim or a general concept:** Suppose you read the second paragraph of p. 37 of this book and then write this in your paper:

Many have attempted to give simple definitions of plagiarism. Harvey, for example, defines it as "passing off the information, ideas, or words of another as your own, by failing to acknowledge their source."³ But plagiarism is not in fact a simple sin: rather, it involves the dastardly trio

of lying, cheating, and stealing. Essentially it means stealing the brainchild – the idea – of another writer and claiming it as your own, thereby gaining unfair advantage over others who have done their own work. "Plagiarism" is a particularly appropriate word for the theft of brainchildren, since it comes from an ancient Latin word for pirates who stole young boys and girls.

3. *Writing with Sources*, Third Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2017), 37.

Here you properly cite the quotation in the first sentence, and the Latin etymology of child-stealer given in the last sentence is common (dictionary) knowledge. But the idea of stealing a brainchild is not common, nor is the claim of the triple sin involved in plagiarism. These distinctive ideas are plagiarized from the final paragraph on p. 37 of this book, even though you present them in a different order and in different words, because they are uncited. Like the "But" that begins your second sentence, your citation in the first sentence of your paragraph is a deception. It makes readers think that you are fair and scrupulous, and that you have a viewpoint distinct from the source's, when in fact you are being both unscrupulous and unoriginal.

(c) **An unquoted but verbatim phrase or passage:** Suppose that you have read the second paragraph on p. 38 of this book and you write this:

Plagiarism, as Harvey suggests, is often the result of fatigue and panic. Imagine that it is 3:00 A.M. The student in question, a good student and certainly not the kind who would cold-bloodedly plagiarize a whole paper, has started on his paper too late. By the next afternoon, he has neither the time nor the inclination to fight the blending and blurring of his sources'

words into his own. Imperceptibly, he crosses a moral line.⁴

4. *Writing with Sources*, Third Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2017), 38.

Here you end your paragraph with a citation that acknowledges a general reliance on the ideas of the source text, thus implying that all of the language is your own. Yet you have in fact borrowed several distinctive phrases verbatim, without quotation marks: "cold-bloodedly," "neither the time nor the inclination," "blending and blurring," "crosses a moral line." You may fix on certain words in a source as more striking than those around them, but this is all the more reason to give credit for the words by quoting, not simply citing. Beware of this kind of plagiarism, especially when you are summarizing background material that you don't think an "essential" part of the paper, or that you feel the source author has already summarized quite nicely.

(d) *An uncited structure or organizing strategy*: Look back over page 38. Suppose that, having read those paragraphs, you write this:

The occasions of plagiarism vary. Kim, a foreign student, simply didn't understand American notions of intellectual property and citation. In his paper he relied heavily on the idea of one book, to the exclusion of his own ideas, thinking that this was the best way to honor the writer's authority. Michelle steeped herself so thoroughly in her sources that, when she wrote her paper, she took over a fundamental idea in them as a given and accidentally reproduced some of their most striking turns of phrase. Eric, having taken invertebrate biology only because it fit neatly into his schedule, did almost none of the course reading and simply printed out a term paper he found on

the Internet. Glenn and Sara, more typical cases, actually liked the invertebrate course and intended to write good papers for it, but simply ran out of time to come up with their own ideas. Hurriedly bringing his paraphrased notes over into his draft, just a few hours before the deadline, Glenn started letting his sources' ideas mix in with his own. About this same time, Sara, who had been staring at her blank computer screen all morning, was finally overwhelmed by anxiety and went looking for the paper her roommate had shown her that she had written for the same class last year.

Your words and details here are indeed original, and the general idea that plagiarism occurs in different circumstances is obvious enough to count as common knowledge and doesn't need citing.

You have, however, taken the structural framework or outline of the passage directly from the source passage, which considers patch plagiarizing a result of (a) ignorance of the rules, or (b) oblivious absorption of an idea or replication of a phrase, in addition to (c) wholesale plagiarizing out of indifference or laziness, and (d) plagiarizing in a time panic, either by careless note-taking or deliberate copying. Providing no citation, you plagiarize a distinctive intellectual structure or way of proceeding with a topic—even though, again, your language differs from that of your source and your invented examples are original. You could have fairly introduced this latter fact and been credited for it by saying, for example, "The occasions of plagiarism (as mapped in a general way by Harvey) vary widely," and ending the sentence with a footnote.

III AVOID AMBIGUOUS OR INCOMPLETE CITING

Students who have cited incompletely in one of the following ways may find themselves accused of plagiarism.

- A source name is mentioned in the student's paper, at the point at which the source has been drawn upon, but no publication information has been provided in a citation or reference list.
- Author and publication information for the source is provided in a list of references but not cited at the point in the paper where the source is drawn upon.
- Author and publication information are given for a passage that draws heavily on a specific section of a source, but no page number is provided.

These are occasionally real oversights; but when readers are unable to find enough information to allow them to verify a source, they may suspect that the incomplete citing is attempting to disguise an overreliance on a source—as it sometimes is. Students who then protest that the source *is* mentioned in the paper, and that they were simply sloppy about citing, face the difficult task of proving that their plagiarism was accidental.

3.3 Other Misuses of Sources

(a) **Misrepresenting Evidence:** When you have an idea or interpretation that you wish to be true—especially when the assignment is due shortly—you may be tempted to fudge your evidence to make it seem true. You may be tempted to ignore or sweep under the carpet evidence that you know doesn't fit, in which case you are simply betraying your own intelligence.

However, you may also be tempted into more serious violations of academic honesty. You might be tempted to quote or paraphrase a source out of context or in misleading excerpts, so it seems to say what you want. You would be doing this if, in your essay on plagiarism in American colleges, you argued that most plagiarism in college papers is accidental, and you wrote the following:

Harvey believes that, although sometimes a panicking paper-writer "has neither the time nor the inclination" to resist the incursion of a source's ideas, students are "confused about the rules of acknowledgment."⁵

5. *Writing with Sources*, Third Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2017), 38.

The quoted passages can indeed be found on p. 38 of this volume, but the emphasis there—that only a *few* students are confused—is the opposite of what your summary implies.

Still more seriously, you might be tempted into altering or fabricating a source or some data. Because this kind of deception violates the basic principle of scholarly communities, in which members build on one another's work (the principle of valid reasoning based on true evidence), and because such a deception may suggest an inclination to commit similar acts in later life, it will usually result in serious action by the instructor or the school or college.

(b) **Improper Collaboration:** This occurs when two students submit more or less identical written work for an assignment on which they have worked together, and which is not a group presentation. Collaborative discussion and brainstorming is a vital activity for professional scholars; indeed, most articles in the sciences and social sciences have multiple authors. However, the author or authors of articles not only acknowledge in the completed article the contribution of other discussants, they also write the article on their own. When you are asked to collaborate on a project but are required to submit

separate papers, you must write up your paper on your own, acknowledging the extent of your collaboration in a note (see section 2.5).

You and your partner(s) should not compose the report or exam or problem answers as you sit together or share a Google Doc, but rather write up notes. If you divide up the work (assuming the assignment allows it), don't write up your part and upload or send it to your partner, but rather send or bring notes to your meeting; and then *discuss* those notes, don't just copy them. Finally, beware of your partner's request, at the last minute and in a panic, to read over your finished report; you may be tempting him or her to plagiarize. Professional scholars do ask one another to read drafts; but again, in these cases only one paper is being produced, not two. If you're unsure about your instructor's policy on collaboration, ask.

(c) **Dual or Overlapping Submission:** Don't take it upon yourself to decide that work you plan to submit for one course, though in many places identical to work you will submit or have submitted for another course, is "different enough" by virtue of small changes you have made (e.g., an added section or an altered introduction or conclusion). When you are running late and need to submit a paper, don't simply submit a cut-and-pasted version of the paper you submitted for another course. Either act will land you in disciplinary trouble. You must first get permission from both instructors for such submissions. Be aware that, should your instructors give you permission for dual submission, they will likely require from you a longer paper than they require of other students in the course.

(d) **Abetting Plagiarism:** You are also guilty of misusing sources if you knowingly help another student plagiarize—whether by letting the student have or copy from your own paper, or by writing a paper or part of a paper for the student (as, for example, when in the course of "editing" a paper for another student, you go beyond correcting mechanical errors and begin rewriting significant portions of the paper). Any of

[K] AVOID ALL-BUT QUOTING

If your own sentences follow the source so closely in idea and sentence structure that the result is really closer to quotation than to paraphrase, you are plagiarizing, even if you have cited the source. You may not simply alter a few words of your source—even of a source such as an abstract you read for a literature review. You need to recast your summary into your own words and sentence structure (as in the example at the top of page 25), or quote directly.

these actions makes you liable to disciplinary action. It is right to be generous and collegial; however, when another student asks you for help with a paper, try whenever possible to phrase your comments as questions that will draw out the student's own ideas.

3.4 Bad Strategies and High-Risk Situations

Students who misuse sources usually don't plan to. They plan to write thoughtful papers that display their own thinking, but they get themselves into situations in which they either misuse sources from haste or negligence, or they come to believe that they have no choice *but* to misuse sources. Following are some (bad) ideas and attitudes that help create such predicaments.

1. **"Start late; adrenalin will get you through."** No, adrenalin may get you through an all-nighter; but for a substantial paper, starting a week before the due date may be starting late. You will always be surprised by how much thought and work a paper requires. This will be especially true for a paper that you have been putting off because you don't understand the material or simply haven't connected with the course. Procrastinating in such situations is a frequent cause of plagiarism.

2. *"Don't waste time writing until you know what you want to say."* No, in most cases, you won't know what you have to say until you do write—until you have jotted and assembled notes (the earlier you begin doing so, however casually, the better) and taken several cracks at formulating your main idea. To prevent a last-minute panic, set aside enough time to write a draft and a serious revision. If research is involved, set aside even more time to formulate a question, do research and become temporarily overwhelmed, reformulate your question in light of what your research revealed, then do more focused research. Arriving at an idea is the end of this process, not the start.

3. *"Just skim the assignment prompt, don't get bogged down in its details."* No, such skimming can in fact lead to late realizations and panic. Because even important aspects of an assignment may not be obvious immediately, read the prompt closely and revisit it while you are writing. The little time this takes is worth the plenty it can save: a stitch in time saves nine. Read the prompt when you first get it, jotting down initial thoughts or questions and get the topic turning over in your mind; this will allow you to notice relevant material in subsequent reading, lectures, and discussions. When you start taking notes and planning out the paper, read the prompt again to get clear on its goals, especially regarding how much, if any, research is required or permitted.

Read the prompt yet again when you start writing, at which point you're in a position to appreciate what the challenges of the assignment really are and what the prompt says about them. It may provide more definite advice and direction than you first realized, perhaps asking you to focus on a particular aspect of the topic, not to give the breezy overview of aspects you were planning; or to focus on a few primary sources, using secondary sources only for framing or not to use them at all.

4. *"Part of the assignment is guessing what your instructor expects."* No, although you do need to find your own way

to write the paper, and no instructor likes to be asked to "just tell me what you want," it's the instructor's job to make clear the expectations of an assignment. Instructors, knowing the material and field so well, sometimes think these expectations are obvious when they aren't. If the assignment is confusing on a second read-through, when you've begun to plan and write, contact your instructor and go to his or her office hours. He or she may be able to provide or describe samples of this kind of paper from earlier classes, offer hypothetical theses or approaches, or suggest a good way to get started on the paper.

It's up to you to ask for clarification, however. The fact that an assignment doesn't fully explain itself does not excuse plagiarism.

5. *"Follow your interest above all."* Well, not above *all*. Discovering topics you care about is one of the skills of good writing. If, however, you decide to write on a topic which, although only tangential to the course or assignment, interests you so much that you're sure the paper will write itself, or about which you have discovered some irresistibly fascinating information, let your instructor know. If you light out on your own away from the assignment, especially if you do so late in the game, you may find yourself unexpectedly at a dead end or in an intellectual swamp. To work your way out, or to work out how your topic in fact does connect to the course, you may need to get an extension. Don't panic and try to solve your problem by plagiarizing.

6. *"To get the lay of the land, start every paper by doing an Internet search of key terms and skimming sources that turn up."* No; although this approach may indeed generate ideas, it's just as likely to overwhelm and paralyze you, alienating you from your own instincts and interests in the topic. Try instead to get down some of your own thoughts and responses early, so you have at least a starting point that is your own and that can help narrow your search. If the assignment itself doesn't ask prompting questions, try free-writing or brainstorming, formulating a hard question for yourself to answer,

locating areas of problem or conflict, imagining different viewpoints, or picking a few key passages and annotating them closely.

7. *"Do all your work on-screen, where the action is."* No, that can be the problem: too much action, not enough thought, since your computer is also where all the distractions are—not just e-mail and social media but thousands of further sources to check out. At a certain point, in working with sources online, you should change the scene and tempo by selecting and printing out the main sources you plan to use and sitting down elsewhere to read and annotate them. A significant challenge of writing with sources in the Internet age, the age of high volumes and high speeds, is simply to make yourself take time to digest and reflect upon your material with undistracted attention.

For the same reason, print out and take away to read the drafts of papers you write. Hard copy, especially if read aloud, makes it easier to notice problems in your expression and logic. It also makes it harder to ignore a questionable use of sources that may have seemed all right in the fluid online world.

8. *"When taking notes on sources, just summarize what they say; come up with your own ideas afterward."* No, in fact, this approach may leave you with a lot of summarized ideas and no time left to come up with your own. In general, take notes actively, not passively. Don't just copy down or summarize the source's words or ideas; record your reactions, reflections, questions, and hunches as you go. Note where you find yourself resisting, doubting, or puzzling over what a source says, or connecting it to something else; jot down possible arguments or observations you might want to make. These will provide starting points when you begin to frame the project of your paper, and they will help keep you from feeling overwhelmed by your sources—or your notes.

When you do summarize, don't loosely copy source material and simply change a few words; either summarize radically (see section 2.1) or quote exactly, using quotation marks.

[L] INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND THE INTERNET

Working with sources online is no different, morally, than working with sources off shelves. Online sources may give the *impression* of not being anyone's intellectual property. The sheer volume of flowing information and ideas, their apparently merely virtual existence, the ease with which they can be appropriated and manipulated, the project of digitizing the world's libraries into a single pool of knowledge, the constant advances in storage and access technology that make conventions of attribution seem outdated, and attempts to update conventions seem tentative—all these factors contribute to that impression. So does the fact that much of the Internet in fact is unregulated, a network of sites freely importing, exporting, and adapting material from one another in spirit of open access, free borrowing, and common ownership.

But although human knowledge is indeed the inheritance of all humans, reliable knowledge is gathered, formulated, and established through the efforts of individuals, working in careful and regulated ways. The laissez-faire ethic of the web may be adequate for amateur assemblages of knowledge; but the scholarly enterprise, whereby painstaking work builds on earlier painstaking work toward truth, requires careful attribution.

9. *"Your paper is your responsibility; hole up and write it."* Yes, writing does tend to be solitary work requiring you to ignore distractions; but even a little input from others can help greatly. Even if the assignment prompt doesn't require you to write in stages, for a paper of any length you should try to crystallize your early thoughts into a brief proposal or outline and get a brief response to this from your instructor or

a classmate (who may want you to return the favor or even to exchange drafts for critique). Getting early feedback from others can help you get unstuck; it can give you ideas or tip you off to problems that, on your own, you may realize too late. And it gives you a living audience to imagine as you write, which can help you imagine what to say.

10. *"During your initial reading of sources, keeping track of publication information will only slow you down, and you may not even use some of the sources."* No. Here again, time taken early, to save publication data for all sources you read, will repay itself in the late stages of writing when time is short and when—because the book you need may be buried or back on the library shelf—you might be tempted to do the citation from memory or just to skip it altogether. Worse, if you have recorded source ideas anonymously, you may mistake them, willfully or not, for your own. URLs will remain in your browser's history, of course, but that history may get erased. If you cut and paste a passage from one place to another, you may forget where it came from, or the site may change or disappear; and, more dangerously, the passage may become detached from the source information. For these reasons, you should paste the URL to any source material you have copied. Also keep in mind that if questions arise about the source of your ideas, you may be asked to produce your notes, sources, and research process; so keep a copy of any key sections of online sources.

11. *"Compose your paper in the file where you have collected your sources and notes, so these can be readily drawn in."* No. In fact, they may be too readily drawn in, if you compose this way. The accidental or not-so-accidental blending of source ideas and language into paraphrase, and of paraphrase or summary into argument, is a major cause of plagiarism.

When you write with sources, work with at least two distinct files. Keep source material in one file, with publication information attached. Keep your notes on sources (your summaries and paraphrases, key quotations and commentaries),

into which you copy only the most relevant excerpts from the sources themselves—in a separate file or at least in a different font or color (keep your source language in this font or color throughout the composing process). Compose your paper itself in a separate file, bringing in source material as needed for the argument you develop.

12. *"Try to sound impressive and sophisticated, like a real scholar."* No; although your style will show the influence of the scholars you read and the kinds of moves they make, don't try to sound more learned than you are. Your papers aren't expected to sound just like the articles you read, and indeed your intelligence will emerge most clearly in a plain, direct style. Such a style will also keep clear the distinction between your own thinking and your sources'. Once you begin to appropriate a voice that isn't yours, moreover, it becomes easier to appropriate words and ideas—to plagiarize. It's harder to be dishonest in a plain style than in a fancy one.

You may become paralyzed, especially in a field that's new to you, by an exaggerated idea of what would be an original enough idea for a paper. If this happens, get clarification from your instructor. When working with difficult sources, it can be an achievement simply to summarize plainly and accurately or to integrate your summaries. In such cases, you are usually not expected to resolve issues that experts have been debating for years, but only to organize the material and clarify the issues, bringing out their complexity, in your own way.

13. *"Don't seek help if you find yourself in a jam; it's humiliating and will single you out to your instructor as a screwup."* No! Plagiarizing can lead to a far greater humiliation and singling-out. Whatever has made you feel stuck, confused, or panicked about time—and there may be many reasons, including problems in your life—let your instructor know. He or she is spending less time thinking about your late paper than you imagine, and is more willing to help you succeed.

The sooner you make contact, the better. Make contact even if you feel embarrassed that you've let yourself get into the situation again, or because you haven't attended lectures or sections, or think you're the only student in the class who is having trouble (you aren't). If you feel that you have a special fear or block about writing papers, or procrastinate excessively, or if you have chronic difficulty organizing and prioritizing work, talk to a teacher or counselor.

14. *"In a pinch, borrow a friend's paper to inspire you, or borrow some notes to work with."* No, if you're really in a pinch, reading another student's finished paper may well discourage or panic rather than inspire you, and it may tempt you to plagiarize. Instead, ask the student to help you brainstorm some of your own ideas. As for borrowed notes, you have no way of knowing their source; they may come directly from a book or lecture, or from a book discussed in a lecture.

What you *should* do in a pinch, with all legitimate options exhausted, is face the music: hand in whatever you have written, cited honestly, and either ask apologetically for more time to complete the work and accept any grade penalty for this, or just accept the lower grade you may receive for too much mere summarizing. That grade will matter far less in the story of your life than will the consequences of plagiarizing.

[M] ENCOUNTERING "YOUR" IDEA IN A SOURCE

Should this happen, don't pretend that you never encountered the source—but don't panic either.

If it's your major idea and you're near the end of work on the paper, finish writing your argument as you have conceived it. Then look closely at the source in question; chances are that its idea isn't exactly the same as yours, that you have a slightly different emphasis or slant, or that you are considering somewhat different

topics and evidence. In this case you can either mention and cite the source in the course of your argument ("*my contention, like Ann Harrison's, is that . . .*" or "*I share Ann Harrison's view that . . .*"), but stress the differences in your account—what you have noticed that Harrison hasn't. Go back and reshape your argument slightly, to bring out the different emphasis. If the argument in the source really is the same as yours, and you are in the midst of a long paper, go to your instructor, who may be able to suggest a slightly different direction for your paper. If you aren't writing a major paper, and/or haven't time to recast, use a note of acknowledgment:

12. In the final stages of writing this paper, I discovered Ann Harrison's article "Echo and Her Medieval Sisters," *Centennial Review* 26.4 (Fall 1982), 326-40, which comes to the same conclusion. See pp. 331-2.

Don't try to use such a note to cover plagiarism. Your instructor will know from your paper whether you had your own, well-developed idea before reading the source, and may ask you to produce your rough notes or drafts. (To be safe, always hold on to these until a paper has been returned.)