

WRITING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

Writing evidence-based claims is a little different from writing stories or just writing about something. You need to **follow a few steps** as you write.

1. ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT

Your readers must know **where your claim is coming from** and **why it's relevant**.

Depending on the scope of your piece and claim, the context differs.

If your whole piece is one claim or if you're introducing the first major claim of your piece, the entire context must be established:

In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Ernest Hemingway develops...

Purposes of evidence-based writing vary. In some cases, naming the book and author might be enough to establish the relevance of your claim. In other cases, you might want to supply additional information:

In literature, authors often use the technique *in media res* where they begin a story in the middle of the action rather than at the beginning. In his short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Ernest Hemingway develops...

If your claim is part of a larger piece with multiple claims, then the context might be simpler:

To create this effect, Hemingway... or In paragraph 5, Hemingway...

2. STATE YOUR CLAIM CLEARLY

How you state your claim is important; it must **precisely and comprehensively express your analysis**.

Figuring out how to state claims is a **process**; writers revise them continually as they write their supporting evidence. Here's a claim about how Hemingway uses various points of view to characterize the character of Francis Macomber:

In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Ernest Hemingway develops the characters of the short story by jumping from one character's point of view to another.

When writing claims, it is often useful to describe parts of the claim before providing the supporting evidence. In this case, the writer might want to briefly identify and describe the encounter between Macomber and the lion:

In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Ernest Hemingway develops the characters of the short story by jumping from one character's point of view to another. Although the hunting scene is largely told from Macomber's perspective, Hemingway alternates the perspective of both the lion and Macomber to highlight his fear and cowardice character.

The explanation in the second sentence about how Hemingway uses a shifting point of view is relevant to the claim. It also begins connecting the claim to ideas that will be used as evidence.

Remember, you should continually return to and re-phrase your claim as you write the supporting evidence to make sure you are capturing exactly what you want to say. Writing out the evidence always helps you figure out what you really think.

3. ORGANIZE YOUR SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Many claims contain multiple aspects that require different evidence that can be expressed in separate paragraphs. This claim can be organized sequentially, contrasting each perspective throughout the stages of the hunt: An account of **THE START OF THE ENCOUNTER**, an account of **AFTER THE INITIAL SHOTS**, and an account of **THE FINAL ENCOUNTER**.

Here are two paragraphs that support the claim with evidence for the first two stages.

An account of **THE START OF THE ENCOUNTER**:

The comparison starts with the different ways the lion and Macomber begin their encounter. As Macomber got out of the car "the lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this object that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking like some super-rhino" (pg 15). This majestic coolness is contrasted with what the heavily armed Macomber was feeling at the time: "He only knew his hands were shaking and as he walked away from the car it was almost impossible for him to make his legs move. They were stiff in the thighs, but he could feel the muscles fluttering" (pg 15). Standing fearfully atop his "fluttering" thighs, Macomber manages to wound the lion with a few "gut-shot(s)" (pg 16).

An account of **AFTER THE INITIAL SHOTS**:

The next sequence of shifting perspective sets up another contrast of character. The lion, now facing an enemy who has just shot and wounded him unprovoked, prepares bravely and calmly for their next encounter: "He galloped toward the high grass where he could crouch and not be seen and make them bring the crashing thing close enough so he could make a rush and get the man that held it" (pg 15). In contrast, Macomber does everything he can to avoid going into the grass after the lion. "Can't we set the grass on fire?...Can't we send beaters?...What about the gun-bearers?...Why not just leave him?" (pg 17-18). He will put other men's lives in danger to avoid confronting the lion. At one point, he even blurts out uncontrollably, "I don't want to go in there" (pg 17).

Notice the phrase, "The next sequence," starting the second paragraph. **Transitional phrases** like this one aid the organization by showing how the ideas relate to each other or are further developed.

4. PARAPHRASE AND QUOTE

Written evidence from texts can be paraphrased or quoted. It's up to the writer to decide which works better for each piece of evidence. Paraphrasing is **putting the author's words into your own**. This works well when the author originally expresses the idea you want to include across many sentences. You might write it more briefly.

The second sentence from paragraph 2 begins by paraphrasing Hemingway's description of the lion. The ideas are his, but the exact way of writing is not.

The lion, now facing an enemy who has just shot and wounded him unprovoked, prepares bravely and calmly for their next encounter.

Some evidence is better quoted than paraphrased. If an author has found the quickest way to phrase the idea or the words are especially strong, you might want to **use the author's words**.

The second sentence in paragraph 1 quotes Hemingway exactly:

As Macomber got out of the car "the lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this object that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking like some super-rhino" (pg 15).

5. REFERENCE YOUR EVIDENCE

Whether you paraphrase or quote the author's words, you must include **the exact location where the ideas come from**. Direct quotes are written in quotation marks. How writers include the reference can vary depending on the piece and the original text. Here the writer puts the page numbers from the original text in parentheses at the end of the sentence.