

Intellectual Property

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READING 1

Doris Kearns Goodwin. "How I Caused That Story," *Time*, 4 February 2002, 69.

-- Discussion of Reading 1 -----

1. Describe the citation mistakes that Goodwin made in *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*. (Goodwin failed to provide quotation marks for phrases that she had taken verbatim from a book by Lynne McTaggart, even though she cited McTaggart in her footnotes.)
2. What type of research and writing did Goodwin do for this book? (She spent ten years researching and writing the book. She took notes in longhand from a multitude of primary materials. She took handwritten notes on perhaps 300 books, and the notes were arranged chronologically and kept in folders in banker's boxes. Her notes combined direct quotes and paraphrased sentences.)
3. How does Goodwin explain her citation mistakes? (She said the possibility of error was increased because she used so many research materials. She did not fully recheck all of the 300 books she had used but relied instead on her notes. She said that if she

had had the books in front of her rather than her notes, she would have caught mistakes in the first place and placed any borrowed phrases in direct quotes. She said she is a fallible person and cannot guarantee that she will not make mistakes.)

4. Why was this incident particularly hard for Goodwin? (Goodwin said she takes great pride in the depth of her research and the extensiveness of her citations.)
5. How does Goodwin plan to minimize the possibility of error from now on? (She will institute a process of research and writing that minimizes the possibility of error. She now uses a computer for both organizing and taking notes, and a scanner, which reproduces the passages she wants to cite. She keeps her own comments in a separate file. She also uses the footnote key on the computer, so she inserts citations directly into the text while the sources are still in front of her.)
6. Goodwin describes herself as a fallible person. Explain what this means. (She is not perfect. She is an imperfect human being and thus cannot be expected to avoid all mistakes in the future.)
7. How convincing is Goodwin's justification of her citation errors?
8. Write a one-sentence statement in your own words of the main idea of the article. (Doris Kearns Goodwin says her unintentional errors in citation resulted from careless research methods, but she now uses a computer for her writing and research to minimize the possibility of errors.)

READING 2

David Gergen. "Love Songs to America," *U.S. News & World Report*, 10 June 2002, 60.

-- Discussion of Reading 2 -----

1. What is Gergen's opinion about the charges of plagiarism that have been made against the historians Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin? (Gergen asks for a kinder judgment of these writers' professional frailties. He believes that their mistakes were not intentional and are forgivable. We should judge these writers by their excellent work, not by their mistakes.)

2. How did Ambrose respond to these charges? (Ambrose said that while he has not always placed the words of others in quotes, he has always provided footnotes showing his sources, and the controversy involves only 10 pages out of 15,000 he has written. He said, “The people decide.”)
3. Which people does Gergen mention to support his opinion that “their mistakes were inadvertent, born of haste, not intentional. . . . relatively minor”? (Gergen mentions Winston Churchill and Shakespeare, who borrowed from other writers, and literary critic Harold Bloom, who said an inspired form of borrowing lies at the heart of much great literature.)
4. Explain the meaning of Gergen’s statement: “Standards must be maintained, but it is also important to maintain perspective.” (Gergen believes we must take into account the whole body of work of these writers, and not just their mistakes. We must consider how much these authors have enriched our culture through their historical writing, thus helping cure Americans’ ignorance of the past.)
5. Do you agree with Gergen’s opinion on the plagiarism committed by Goodwin and Ambrose? Justify your answer.
6. Write a one-sentence statement in your own words of the main idea of the article. (David Gergen admires the contributions to historical writing made by Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin and argues that their unintentional plagiarism should be excused as minor mistakes.)

Paul Gray. "Other People's Words," *Smithsonian*, March 2002, 102–03.

-- Discussion of Reading 3 -----

1. What is the purpose of Gray's discussion of the high school student who has plagiarized in a research paper? (Gray sets the stage for a discussion of plagiarism, and he draws a distinction between students who are learning about citation of sources and professional writers who should know about the importance of citations.)
2. Why were most academic historians baffled by Stephen Ambrose's explanation of his citation errors? (Ambrose gave a somewhat hostile response in which he said he hadn't been careless at all, in his opinion.)
3. List Gray's other examples of well-known people who have plagiarized. (Doris Kearns Goodwin, Alex Haley, Senator Joseph Biden, Susan Sontag, Jay McInerney)
4. For what reason are quotation marks used around words? (Quotation marks show that the writer is using someone else's language.)
5. What is the modern meaning of the word *original*? (The modern meaning of *original* is *created by the writer*.)
6. Why was Gray troubled by the plagiarism of Ambrose and Goodwin? (Gray believes that unintentional theft remains theft, whether committed by those who know better or by those who are in the process of learning. He also doesn't accept the rather blithe, dismissive self-defenses expressed by both authors.)
7. How does Gray's point of view on the topic of plagiarism differ from Gergen's in Reading 2? (Gray does not find the plagiarism by Ambrose and Goodwin forgivable. He thinks it is theft.)
8. What is tone of this article? Is it objective or subjective? (Gray's tone is subjective, but he presents his point of view logically and reasonably.)
9. Write a one-sentence statement in your own words of the main idea of the article. (Paul Gray does not accept the explanations offered by Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin concerning their plagiarism because he considers plagiarism the theft of another author's words and ideas, even if done unintentionally.)

Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks with the correct words. Use each word only once.

inadvertent upsurge footnotes attribution deceitful
minimize verbatim perspective citing eminent

Plagiarism is an appropriation of another person’s words or ideas without using quotation marks or citing the source. This unethical behavior is treated seriously in the United States. Students who are found guilty of plagiarism may be expelled from their schools. Professional writers who plagiarize may end up facing lawsuits and having to pay large settlements to the writers whose work they used without attribution. However, even though most writers know that they must place words copied verbatim from another author within quotation marks and add footnotes or in-text citations, some writers continue to act as word thieves.

In 2002, two eminent American historians were accused of plagiarizing, and their ethical lapses were publicized in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Boston Globe* among other newspapers. Both Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin were in trouble for including the exact words of other writers in their books without using quotation marks around these words. Ambrose and Goodwin attempted to minimize their errors, pleading careless research and inadvertent mistakes. But *The Boston Globe* of February 24, 2002, reported that Goodwin “may submit up to 50 corrections for passages taken from McTaggart’s book and the historian told the *Times* that her researchers discovered additional lifted quotations in several of her other books published since *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*.”¹

The author of “Should Stephen Ambrose Be Pardoned?” in *Slate.msn.com* (October 14, 2002) takes a highly critical view of Ambrose’s deceitful behavior and says that “Ambrose plagiarized all the time. . . . by heisting memorable, vivid prose, Ambrose passes himself off as a better writer than he was.”² Obviously, this author believes plagiarism should not be pardoned. Writing from the same perspective, Paul Gray in *Smithsonian* magazine finds Ambrose’s explanation unacceptable when Ambrose said: “I wish I had put the quotation marks in, but I didn’t. I am not out there stealing other people’s writing.”³ Thus, Gray concludes: “Unintentional theft remains theft,

1. David Abel. “Goodwin Admits More Material Lifted,” *The Boston Globe*, 24 February 2002, B3.
2. David Plotz. “Should Stephen Ambrose Be Pardoned?” 14 October 2002, in <http://slate.msn.com>.
3. Paul Gray. “Other People’s Words,” *Smithsonian*, March 2002, 102.

whether committed by those who know better or by those who are in the process of learning.”⁴

Unfortunately, at academic institutions professors are seeing a/an up-surge in plagiarism, mainly as a result of the numerous Internet sites that provide papers easily. However, other sites offer teachers an analysis of papers in order to determine if students have plagiarized. One such site, Turnitin in Oakland, California, uses “cheat-detection software” to find matching patterns that reveal plagiarism.⁵ At the University of Virginia, 48 students were expelled for plagiarizing after a physics professor developed a computer program that could identify matching passages in 1,500 term papers.⁶ The 48 students were found guilty under the school’s 160-year-old honor code, which emphasizes honesty, respect for tradition, and ethical behavior.⁷ According to Professor Donald McCabe, an expert on academic cheating, honor codes are “an effective strategy for promoting integrity and reducing cheating.”⁸

4. Ibid., 103.

5. “Plagiarise. Let No One Else’s Work Evade Your Eyes,” *The Economist*, 16 March 2002, 81.

6. Michelle Boorstein. “U-Va Expels Students after Plagiarism Probe,” *The Washington Post*, 26 November 2002, B1.

7. Ibid., B1.

8. Jay Mathews. “Eyes on Your Own Papers,” *The Washington Post*, 17 December 2002, A14.