

Knowing When and How to Cite Reference Sources

Prepared by [Stanford University Office of Judicial Affairs](#), used with permission.

Original text from Elaine Tyler May's "Myths and Realities of the American Family" reads as follows:

Because women's wages often continue to reflect the fiction that men earn the family wage, single mothers rarely earn enough to support themselves and their children adequately. And because work is still organized around the assumption that mothers stay home with children, even though few mothers can afford to do so, child-care facilities in the United States remain woefully inadequate.

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<http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/plagiarism.shtml>, Sept. 9, 2009

Version A:

Since women's wages often continue to reflect the mistaken notion that men are the main wage earners in the family, single mothers rarely make enough to support themselves and their children very well. Also, because work in still based on the assumption that mothers stay home with children, facilities for child care remain woefully inadequate in the United States.

Question: Is this plagiarism? Explain your conclusion

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Answer-Version A: The above paragraph is plagiarism:

In Version A there is too much direct borrowing of sentence structure and wording. The writer changes some words, drops one phrase, and adds some new language, but the overall text closely resembles May's. Even with a citation, the writer is still plagiarizing because the lack of quotation marks indicates that Version A is a paraphrase, and should thus be in the writer's own language.

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Version B:

As Elaine Tyler May points out, “women’s wages often continue to reflect the fiction that men earn the family wage” (588). Thus many single mothers cannot support themselves and their children adequately. Furthermore, since work is based on the assumption that mothers stay home with children, facilities for day care in this country are still “woefully inadequate.” (May 589).

Question: Is this plagiarism? Explain your conclusion

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Answer-Version B:

Plagiarism: The writer now cites May, so we're closer to telling the truth about the relationship of our text to the source, but this text continues to borrow too much language.

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Version C:

By and large, our economy still operates on the mistaken notion that men are the main breadwinners in the family. Thus, women continue to earn lower wages than men. This means, in effect, that many single mothers cannot earn a decent living. Furthermore, adequate day care is not available in the United States because of the mistaken assumption that mothers remain at home with their children.

Question: Is this plagiarism? Explain your conclusion

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Answer-Version C:

Plagiarism: Version C shows good paraphrasing of wording and sentence structure, but May's original ideas are not acknowledged. Some of May's points are common knowledge (women earn less than men, many single mothers live in poverty), but May uses this common knowledge to make a specific and original point and her original conception of this idea is not acknowledged.

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Version D:

Women today still earn less than men-so much less that many single mothers and their children live near or below the poverty line. Elaine Tyler May argues that this situation stems in part from “the fiction that men earn the family wage” (588). May further suggests that the American workplace still operates on the assumption that mothers with children stay home to care for them (589).

This assumption, in my opinion, does not have the force it once did. More and more businesses offer in-house day-care facilities...

Question: Is this plagiarism? Explain your conclusion

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Answer-Version:

No Plagiarism: The writer makes use of common knowledge in May's work, but acknowledges May's original conclusion and does not try to pass it off as his or her own. The quotation is properly cited, as is a later paraphrase of another of May's ideas.

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