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Common Knowledge and Quotations

Common Knowledge can be defined as facts known by a large number of people. The following statement is an example of common knowledge:

Sir John A. Macdonald was the first Prime Minister of Canada.

A large number of people know this fact and consequently the above example does not need to be cited.

However, if you state anything not considered common knowledge, or make any statement that is an interpretation of the facts, you will have to cite your source. (The following examples are based on MLA format.) For example, the following statement would have to be cited:

Sir John A. Macdonald did more to consolidate and define the Dominion of Canada than any other leading politician of his day (Bliss 4).

There are two reasons why the above example should be cited:

- 1) The thought and idea was found in Bliss' book *Right Honourable Men*.
- 2) Bliss interprets the role that Sir John A. Macdonald and others played in the political life of Canada.

A *quotation* is any phrase or statement that is someone else's exact words. To cite a quotation, simply put quotation marks around the statement in question and document the source using an appropriate style guide.

Michael Bliss writes, "As Macdonald grew old in power, becoming something of a national institution, opinion was equally divided on whether his scheming and manipulation had been noble or cynical" (5).

OR

"As Macdonald grew old in power, becoming something of a national institution, opinion was equally divided on whether his scheming and manipulation had been noble or cynical" (Bliss 5).

* You must always cite the author and the page number when using a quotation.