Plagiarism Vignette Transcript

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

After class, a student, SARAH, approaches the professor, SMITH, as he is gathering his papers.

SMITH
Hello Sarah.

SARAH
Hi. I was wondering if you had a chance to review my paper.

SMITH
Oh, yes, I glanced over it.

He sifts through the papers and pulls out her paper, marked up with pen.

SMITH (CONT’D)
I made a few notes...

SARAH
A lot of notes. Is this bad?

SMITH
No, no, just mostly suggestions, things to think about. It really was quite good for your first paper in the class. I was impressed.

SARAH
Thanks, that’s good to hear.

She pages through the paper and skims his notes.

SMITH
But I did want to ask you about a few of your sources. You see I noticed that you didn’t cite anything or include a Works Cited page.

SARAH
Oh, I guess I do use a few quotes. I’ll be sure to do a bibliography for the final draft.

SMITH
Well, it’s not just the quotes. You see, I’ve asked the class to use the MLA style. There are other styles out there, but we’re using MLA here. Now then, that means that you have to include a Works Cited page to document everything that you’ve referenced.
SARAH
   Even if I don’t quote it? I mean, I paraphrased some things, but I put it into my own words, so I didn’t plagiarize at all.

SMITH
   Actually, (He looks past her, clearly reading off a cue card) Sometimes paraphrasing can cause unintentional plagiarism. This may mean that your ideas are blended with the words of others that improperly appear to be yours.

SARAH
   Oh... So should I just use direct quotes?

SMITH
   No, no, don’t think of citing as a limitation. (reading again)―Using exact quotes should be reserved for situations where the original author has stated the idea in a better way than any paraphrase you might come up with.” But responsible writers should also specify whenever they refer to another author’s ideas or facts.

SARAH
   Okay... That makes sense.

SMITH
   (Looks back at Sarah) For example, in the script of the video we’re in right now—

SARAH
   What?

SMITH
   the writer used some ideas that aren’t his own and haven’t been properly cited.

SARAH
   Wait, what video?

SMITH
   For instance...

SARAH
   Who are you talking to?

Smith walks past the table, pointing to the chalkboard where Smith’s earlier line “using exact quotes....” is written.

SMITH
   This was a direct quote from the Penn State Department of English Plagiarism guidelines, and should be placed in quotes, (he adds quotes) And include parenthetical citation. (He writes it.)
Sarah stares in confusion.

SMITH (CONT’D)
This...

He points to the next chalkboard panel. His line “sometimes paraphrasing can....” is written.

SMITH (CONT’D)
is a paraphrase, and not a direct “quote.” But it should still include citation that refers to your Works Cited Page. It might also be helpful to refer to the source in the text, such as “According to the Penn State Department of English” etc., etc.

SARAH
Um. Okay.

Smith turns to the camera, like something out of a bad infomercial.

SMITH
You know, sometimes students consider plagiarism because they’re worried about a deadline or they think it might make it easier – or maybe they just aren’t aware of the need to cite. But now, computer software like Turnitin means plagiarism is easier to detect than ever before. “The purpose of a research paper is to synthesize previous research and scholarship with your ideas.” And the rhetorical technique of paraphrase is valuable and powerful. It can simplify and summarize others’ ideas so they can be woven into your own. “You should feel free to use another person’s words, facts, and thoughts in your research paper, but the material you borrow must not be presented as if it were your own creation.” The secret of using sources is to make them work for you, to support and amplify your ideas. Just be sure to use them in identifiable ways, and give them the credit they deserve.

Sarah sneaks out the door behind him. The door closes and he turns to look.

SMITH (CONT’D)
Where’d she go?