

Suggestions for Use:

Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*: Two Accounts

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The objective of this activity is to help students to observe, discuss, and articulate distinctions between paraphrase and plagiarism, and to reflect upon the meaning and impact of academic integrity—as stated in their own terms, and based upon a practical scenario using genuine, not hypothetical examples. Two group discussions, guided by the instructor, provide the framework for the activity, following an initial student reading/analysis of two short accounts of the same book. The first discussion is devoted to comparison of the accounts themselves; the second is a discussion of academic integrity in response to the case at hand.

Account 2 provides three excerpts from the SparkNotes posting on Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*; **Account 1** is a corresponding series of excerpts from an essay submitted by a student, without due attribution to Account 2. This reverse chronological sequence is intentional: the original version is provided after the plagiarized version to recreate the reading sequence in which these texts are typically encountered by an evaluator. The excerpts are short and have been subdivided into corresponding sections: this enables students to quickly engage in textual comparison, and to readily participate in the discussion that follows.

The accounts can be presented with or without the guiding questions provided in bullet points, as some version of these could otherwise be verbally introduced by the instructor as a sequence used to guide initial discussion. However, the actual relationship between the accounts is not provided on the document itself, so that students will not encounter the passages in a pre-judged fashion. The strategy is to create a small mystery to be solved—namely, what is the relationship between these accounts?—as well as an experience of what it is like to read and decode different sources of writing in such a comparative context, before assessing the consequences of that reading experience.

Correspondingly, the terms “plagiarism,” “paraphrase,” and “academic integrity” are not directly applied in the document: rather than simply providing such terms, the strategy is to provoke a discussion in which those terms come to be introduced either by the instructor or by the students themselves, as a way to frame their experience and concerns with the materials encountered in the scenario. After first presenting the two accounts in a neutral context, therefore, the second step is to inform participants that one of the accounts was submitted as a writer's own work, and without acknowledging the pre-existing account.

The instructor can use this second phase of discussion as an opportunity to explore several concerns, addressing matters like the distinctions between paraphrase and concealment, between patchwork and continuous quotation (whether acknowledged or not), between the use of ideas or of direct quotation, and introducing basic techniques of reference to address these concerns and distinctions in written work. Finally, the instructor might ask students how providing peer review for such work by a colleague would impact their relationship with that colleague or the trust they place in their work, and whether they would prefer it if that colleague would instead openly share helpful or interesting sources with them.

Please carefully read the following two accounts of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, and assess the relationship between them.

Account 1

Rousseau's point on the natural goodness of savage man is not rested on any positive quality that man might possess, but rather on his ignorance.

These two qualities [pity for others, and desire for self-preservation] are what makes it possible for savage men to exist together because they would essentially balance out. Pity draws individuals towards each other, while the desire for self-preservation draws them apart. According to Rousseau, these two principles rarely conflict because one man's pity should prevent him from interfering with another's attempts to preserve himself.

Savage man is concerned inwardly and outwardly with freedom and leisure, and thus Rousseau suggests that the savage does not need to adopt any such position because his inner and outer life are in unity and fulfillment. Civil man, on the other hand, lives outwardly and engages with the environment he is in.

Account 2

Rousseau's idea on the natural goodness of savage man rests not on any good quality that man might have, but rather on his ignorance.

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Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*: Two Accounts

Please carefully read the following two accounts of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, and assess the relationship between them. You may wish to consider the following questions as you make your assessment:

- To what extent would you consider these to be different accounts of Rousseau's *Discourse*? That is, what kinds of distinctions do you observe between them?
 - Based on your analysis of these distinctions, how do you think these accounts were produced? Do you think that one might have come before the other?
 - Would you consider it appropriate for the writer of each account to present it as solely the product of their own ideas and efforts? In a nutshell: are there two authors here, or fundamentally just one?
 - What could or should be done to address the issues you have uncovered here?

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