

## Plagiarism: Grounds for Dismissal<sup>1</sup>

The word “plagiarism” comes from the Latin *plagiarius* (“kidnapper”). One writer defines it as “the wrongful act of taking the product of another person’s mind, and presenting it as one’s own” (Alexander Lindey, *Plagiarism and Originality* [New York: Harper, 1952], p. 2). Plagiarism in written papers is analogous to creating an audition tape by copying in the hard parts from a recording by a professional artist or fellow student. Reproducing the words and ideas of someone else without acknowledging their source is theft. The livelihood of performers, composers, and scholars alike depends upon the principle that intellectual property is no less valuable than material property. U.S. copyright law, which applies to both published and unpublished, printed and electronic, oral and written sources, protects ownership of such property, and penalties for infractions are severe. In an academic setting like ours, *failure to document your sources properly may result in a failing grade on the project, failure in the course, academic probation, suspension, and even expulsion from the school.*

In some cases, when students are new to research methods and procedures of citation, plagiarism can be unintentional. In other cases, inadvertent plagiarism may be the result of sloppy note-taking, in which a student has not kept careful track of words and ideas that are copied out from a book, article, liner notes, or online web site. Students should, in any case, understand the full range of ways in which the ideas of others can be represented and cited, especially since all plagiarism—intentional or not—will be punished. The cases below illustrate a few examples of what must be done to avoid plagiarism.

Precise details of citation format will not be addressed here, as individual instructors may prefer different styles of citation in written work. These should be made clear in instructions to their students.

The passage below comes from Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 472. It is followed by illustrations of acceptable and unacceptable ways of using that passage in a paper.

### **SOURCE:**

Superficially, Liszt and Berlioz had much in common: they both exploited a satanic public image, and enjoyed a Gothic taste for the macabre with all its paraphernalia—witches’ Sabbath, march to the scaffold, dance of death. They were both virtuoso conductors, and did perhaps more than anyone else of their time to create the modern image of the orchestral director as an international star. The music they wrote, however, was worlds apart, and the controversy each excited was of a very different nature.

### **1) “Cut and Paste Plagiarism”**

Cutting and pasting the above passage, or any part of it, without using quotation marks and a footnote citing your source, constitutes the most blatant form of plagiarism. In addition, simply listing Rosen’s work in a bibliography at the end of your paper while failing to indicate that you borrowed this particular passage would make you equally guilty of “Cut and Paste Plagiarism.” [Solution: use quotation marks and a footnote or endnote citing your source.]

---

<sup>1</sup> The material presented here is based in part on Section 1.6 of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, eds. Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1984), pp. 19-23.

## 2) *Illegal paraphrases*

### *Version A*

Liszt and Berlioz had a great deal in common: they both capitalized on a satanic public image, and the macabre. They were both virtuoso conductors, and contributed much to the modern image of the orchestral director. Yet, the music they wrote was very different.

[This is just as illegal as the cut-and-paste variety. Although the assertion that Berlioz and Liszt had much in common is widely known, the particular phrases stolen from Rosen, without acknowledgement, make this a clear case of plagiarism.]

### *Version B*

Liszt and Berlioz both exploited a satanic public image and enjoyed a Gothic taste for the macabre. They were both virtuoso conductors, and did perhaps more than anyone else of their time to create the modern image of the orchestral director as an international star. Nevertheless, as Charles Rosen points out, “the music they wrote was very different.”<sup>1</sup>

[This still constitutes plagiarism, even though the author cites Rosen correctly in the final sentence. The proper citation only masks the more extensive debt to Rosen throughout this passage.]

## 3) *Legal adaptations*

### *Version A*

According to musicologist and pianist Charles Rosen, although Liszt and Berlioz shared much in common—including a “satanic public image” and virtuosity as conductors—“the music they wrote. . . was worlds apart, and the controversy each excited was of a very different nature.”<sup>1</sup>

[No plagiarism. The author clearly acknowledges the full extent of the debt to Rosen, both in the way of paraphrase (by way of the tag phrase, “According to musicologist and pianist Charles Rosen”) and direct quotation (through quotation marks). The one omission from the second direct quotation (of the word “however”) is clearly indicated by an ellipsis (. . .).]

### *Version B*

Liszt and Berlioz were both arch-Romanticists, popular public figures, and well known conductors. As composers, however, the two came from very different aesthetic positions.

[This passage does not require a citation because these statements are all found in the most general sources (Grout, Groves, etc), and no phrases are borrowed from our source.]

## **SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- **Internet sources:** In citing online sources, it is not always possible to attribute information to a specific author. One should, in any case, indicate the web site consulted. Direct quotation of passages from electronic media, as from any other source, requires quotation marks and appropriate citation.
- **Commonly known factual information:** Commonly known facts, such as the birth and death dates of composers and general biographical information found in encyclopedias, do not need to be acknowledged in footnotes. Nevertheless, direct quotation of passages from such sources, as from any other, does require quotation marks and appropriate citation.
- **Private conversation or correspondence:** If specific information has been gained from private conversation or correspondence, whether written or electronic, from an unpublished paper, a conference lecture, or class presentation, it is appropriate to acknowledge the source of such information in a footnote or endnote. Any part of a work that results from collaboration with another student or individual must be clearly acknowledged.

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 472.