**Plagiarism exercises**

Compare an excerpt from an original source, a newspaper article, with the following samples of students’ use of the source in their writing. Identify if these samples contain plagiarism, and how serious the plagiarism is. If you were a teacher, how would you handle these cases?

**Original.**

*Gloom Over Tropical Forests*


Tropical forests, which play a vital role in regulating the global climate, are disappearing much more rapidly than previously estimated, according to an international research group. Each year recently, 40 million to 50 million acres (16 million to 20 million hectares) of tropical forest have been lost as trees are cut for timber and land is cleared for agriculture and development, the Word Resources Institute said in its 1990 report. According to the study, the rate of loss in most countries was nearly 50 percent more in 1987 than in 1980. The report said 1.9 billion acres of tropical forest remained.

**Sample A.**

The world is losing its valuable forests at an alarming pace. The Earth’s forests, which are an important factor in the Earth’s climate, were disappearing more quickly in 1987 than previously estimated in 1980. Recently, 40 million to 50 million acres of tropical forest have been lost each year. This is because some forests are cut for timber and some are cleared for other purposes. The group says 1.9 billion acres of tropic forest remain.1


☐ The student committed no plagiarism, i.e., no wrong use of the source.
☐ The student committed some plagiarism, i.e., some wrong use of the source.
☐ The student committed a great amount of plagiarism, i.e., a great amount of wrong use of the source.
Sample B.

Tropical forests, which play a vital role in regulating the global climate, are disappearing much more rapidly than previously estimated, according to an international research group. Each year recently, 40 million to 50 million acres (16 million to 20 million hectares) of tropical forest have been lost as trees are cut for timber and land is cleared for agriculture and development, the Word Resources Institute said in its 1990 report. According to the study, the rate of loss in most countries was nearly 50 percent more in 1987 than in 1980. The report said 1.9 billion acres of tropical forest remained.\footnote{P. Shabecoff, \textit{New York Times}, June 8, 1990, p. 3.}

The student committed no plagiarism, i.e., no wrong use of the source.

Sample C.

The world is losing its valuable forests at an alarming pace. According to recent research done by an international research team, the Earth is losing up to 50 million acres of forests each year. According to the investigation, the rate of loss increased by 50% from 1980 to 1987. The 1990 report indicates 1.9 billion acres of forest remain on Earth. A major concern is that this loss may greatly affect patterns of climate.

The student committed no plagiarism, i.e., no wrong use of the source.

Sample D.

The world is losing its valuable forests at an alarming pace. Forests, which are an important factor in climatic patterns, are being rapidly cut back for timber, agricultural needs, and land development. Studies over the past decade indicate that the rate of loss increased by 50% between 1980 and 1987. At present there is less than two billion acres of forest remaining, and about 40 to 50 million acres are lost annually, according to the Word Resources Institute.\footnote{P. Shabecoff, \textit{New York Times}, June 8, 1990, p. 3.}

The student committed no plagiarism, i.e., no wrong use of the source.
Sample E.

The world is losing its valuable forests at an alarming pace. Philip Shabecoff, summarizing a report based on a recent study done by the World Resources Institute, states, “Each year recently 40 million to 50 million acres of tropical forest have been lost as trees are cut for timber and land is cleared for agriculture and development” (New York Times, 8 June 1990, p. 3). According to the same study, the Earth now has less than two billion acres of forest, and the rate of loss is increasing. The loss of forests can affect global climate.

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Sample F.

The world is losing its valuable forests at an alarming pace. A recent article in the New York Times gives the findings of the World Resources Institute. The findings in this 1990 report are that “at present each year between 40 million and 50 million acres of forest disappear because people cut them down for wood or remove them to make the land ready for other requirements and only 1.9 billion acres remain”\(^1\) Losing so much forest land might affect the climate and cause serious problems.

\(^1\) P. Shabecoff, New York Times, June 8, 1990, p. 3.

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Summary question: Which of the samples represent the worst case of plagiarism, and why?

☐A ☐B ☐C ☐D ☐E ☐F
**Questionnaire.** Discuss or think about the following questions. If you agree with any of these statements, rank the top three reasons that you agree with most, second, and third.

1. If I write this way, I’m unfair to myself because I’m not being myself; rather, I’m pretending to be better than I am, and that makes me feel uncomfortable.
   - [ ] strongly agree  [ ] slightly agree  [ ] slightly disagree  [ ] strongly disagree  [ ] no opinion

2. If I write this way, I’m unfair to the university because its educational goals can never be achieved if students just copy information.

3. If I write this way, I’m unfair to myself because the teacher might recognize what I did and punish me, and other students and my department would find out.

4. When I write this way, I’m unfair to the writer of the original passage because I’m taking the credit that s/he really deserves for the words and ideas.

5. If I write this way, I’m unfair to my classmates because they worked harder by writing in their own words, but I mainly copied and yet get the same or better grade.

6. If I write this way, I’m unfair to myself because I’m not learning much when I just copy another person’s writing.

7. If I write this way, I’m unfair to my teacher because s/he is trying to teach me to write well, but I’m not cooperating.

8. If I write this way in my field of study, I’m unfair to the professors in my department, because they are trying to teach me to be a good student and/or researcher in the field.

9. If I write this way in my field of study, I’m unfair to my fellow students or colleagues, because I just copy information, which is unfair to the others who work harder.

These exercises and questions are based on:

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