USING SECONDARY LITERATURE AND OTHER SOURCES

It is **vital** that you are clear about: **why** you are using secondary texts  
**where** you should use them  
**how** you should use them.

There are two important things to consider here:

(i) the standard of your work (and the mark you receive) will be adversely affected unless you are using secondary literature appropriately;  
(ii) if you do not clearly and fully acknowledge all material which you use from secondary sources, you will be contravening plagiarism rules (with serious academic and possible disciplinary consequences).

The first principle you must hold on to is that in any piece of work (as in your degree generally)

- you are expected to think for yourself.

This doesn’t mean that we necessarily expect you to come up with completely original ideas (a rare achievement); it does mean that you should always use other people’s thoughts and ideas (including your lecturer’s) as a means to developing your own views.

**EVIDENCE**

- Always remember that **evidence**, as such, for any point you wish to argue comes from primary sources  
  (the classical texts themselves, artefacts, inscriptions, facts about archaeological discoveries, etc.)  
  **not** from secondary sources.  
  It follows that when you argue a case you should always base your **principal arguments** on discussion of primary material, although you may often refer to secondary sources for various reasons (see below).

**FORMAT OF REFERENCES IN WRITTEN WORK**

[! See Handbook Sections I 6c–d!!]

N.B. There are a number of recognised ‘systems’ for referring to secondary literature in academic work; you will encounter a variety of others in books/articles which you read. The handbook, however, sets out the format you should follow in our modules.

**AVOIDING PLAGIARISM:** Correct and full acknowledgement of sources and wording

**REMEMBER:** The appearance of any unacknowledged secondary material in your work will normally lead to Assessment Irregularity procedures being invoked.

- If you use an author’s own words, **quote these in inverted commas and acknowledge the source** with a **precise** reference (normally in a footnote) including page references.

  Different views have been taken of the *Iliad*’s central figure. “Achilles’ tragedy is an effect of free choice by a will that falls short of omniscience and is disturbed by anger”.  


- It is often said that Pericles was the forerunner of the so-called ‘demagogues’: as Gomme puts it, “the description of the restless Athenians [...] was the *democratic* ideal, shared by Perikles [...] : Perikles, δημαγωγὸς ὤν, and the great defender of the empire and of sea-power, for they brought glory”.

Note that the inclusion of a footnote is not sufficient by itself if you have used the author’s own words: the following also breaks the rules about plagiarism, since it fails to acknowledge by the use of quotation marks that the whole sentence is taken verbatim from Gomme (with the Greek quotation translated):

It is here that we must begin to consider Pericles. The description of the restless Athenians was the democratic ideal, shared by Perikles, who was a demagogue and the great defender of the empire and of sea-power, for they brought glory.¹


• If there is good reason to do so (e.g. you wish to refer to the author’s point more concisely) you may use your own words, but you must still acknowledge your source:

Achilles can be seen as a flawed hero who chooses his own tragic path,¹ or as a hero acting true to the values of his society.


Also, various actions attributed to Pericles show signs of that ‘appeal for support’ to the whole people which has been seen as the first characteristic of the demagogues.¹


• You need, however, to be clear about what ‘in your own words’ means. It is never good practice to paraphrase a secondary source by changing a few words/expressions here and there, whether or not acknowledgement is included: avoid anything like the following:

a) Achilles’ tragedy arises from independent choice by a will that isn’t omniscient and is disturbed by rage.¹


b) The description of the restless Athenians was the ideal of democracy, shared by Perikles, who was a demagogue and the great champion of the empire and of sea-power, because of the glory they brought.¹
c) It is here that we must begin to consider Pericles, because the restless ambition of the Athenians was the ideal of democracy, which Pericles clearly shared, in his desire to bring glory to the empire through naval power.¹


Even with the footnote acknowledging the source, the wording here is so close to the original that this could qualify as plagiarism (examples (a) & (b), at least, almost certainly would). In any case, all examples are very poor academic practice (and you would lose marks accordingly).

• Unless you are summarizing for the sake of brevity, it is almost always best to quote accurately and use quotation marks, followed by a footnote.

• Positioning of footnotes is important. A footnote reference acknowledges a debt for material immediately preceding it: a phrase or element within a sentence, or the whole sentence at the end of which it is placed. Unless you explicitly indicate otherwise, a footnote does not cover more than one sentence.
NOTE-TAKING PRACTICE

• When you are making notes for your own work, make sure that you distinguish material you have taken from a secondary source, whether a direct quotation or not, from notes of your own thoughts, views and collection of evidence.

• Whenever you take notes from a secondary source:
  -- start (at the outset) by noting the author and title of the source you are working with;
  -- each time you write something down, start by noting the page reference, whether or not you copy matter down verbatim: this will remind you straightaway that you owe the thought /info. etc. to someone else, and enable you both to check the reference later if you need to, and to give the correct reference in your written work.

• If you copy out sections of any length in your notes (from single words to whole paragraphs) put these in inverted commas.

It is not a defence against the academic penalties for plagiarism that you “didn’t realise” material in your work was taken unacknowledged from another source. It is your responsibility to ensure that you know what derives from a secondary source (and therefore must be acknowledged) and what is your own work.

WHY USE SECONDARY LITERATURE: some examples:

a) As a source of information:
   both for wider background information
   and for particular facts.

   References should be included for all such information that is not regarded as ‘common knowledge’.

b) To suggest a range of possible views on issues that come up, including views different to your own. You can then use those views in a number of ways, for example:

   • to help present a rounded discussion of any point at issue, indicating a range of views that may be/have been taken;
   • to refine and develop your own views, e.g.:
     --considering possible counter-arguments to your own view;
     --modifying your position in the light of points that may not have occurred to you yourself; or
     --thinking of how you could, on the evidence, argue against these other views and in favour of yours.

c) To suggest some ideas that will give you a ‘starting point’ for ways of thinking about and exploring a text, issue etc. In that case, you should acknowledge the source of the ‘starting point’ idea(s), but go on to develop the point for yourself.

Remember that in all cases quoting or referring to secondary sources should fit in as part of an overall argument/discussion. Don’t (except occasionally in case (a)) just quote and go on to the next point: you should ‘do something with’ any reference to secondary literature:

  e.g. agree: “X says........... There is a strong case for this, given the evidence of Thuc. xxx and Plut. xx”

  modify: “X says........... This view has much to recommend it (see, e.g., Homer Iliad 9.xxx, 16.xxx), although other considerations should be taken into account...”

  disagree: “X says........... While there are some grounds for holding this view (see, e.g. xxxx), there are strong indications the other way, for instance the passage in Thuc.xxx where......”

Example: Gomme quotation (above) followed by exploring the idea in relation to the primary evidence:

It is often said that Pericles was the forerunner of the so-called ‘demagogues’: as Gomme puts it, “the description of the restless Athenians [...] was the _democratic_ ideal, shared by Perikles [...]: Perikles, δηµαρχωγός ᾽Αθηναίων, and the great defender of the empire and of sea-power, for they brought glory”.1 Pericles was certainly one of the strongest advocates of the imperial and the democratic dream (as is clear from Thuc. II.35-43 and 63-4). It was he who advised the Athenians to go to war rather than compromise either her independence or her influence:
But if you take a firm stand you will make it clear to them that they have to treat you properly as equals [...] we are not in any case going to climb down nor hold our possessions under a constant threat of interference

Thuc. I.140.5, 141.1

Nonetheless, Thucydides’ judgment is that “he led the city moderately and guarded her safely” (II.65.5): that Pericles for all his adventurous ideals had the tempering qualities of prudence and caution. This is clear from his advice given to Athens at the start of the war (Thuc. II.13, 65), and from his refusal to join battle with the Spartans upon the first invasion of Attica (II.21-2).


DEVELOPING YOUR OWN VIEWS

• Wherever possible, get into the habit of reading a text (or looking at other primary material) for yourself first, and beginning to form some preliminary thoughts and views.

• You may well need to modify these views in the light of further and fuller information: especially as you learn, from lectures and books/articles, about ideas and approaches within various societies in the ancient world that may differ from your own and/or from modern assumptions: approaches to literature itself, for example, or ideas about such matters as justice, revenge, religion, war, male-female relationships etc.

But provided you recognise the need to be ready to adapt your views and to be flexible, doing some thinking on your own to begin with is very often the best start.

See further:
R. Marggraf Turley, Writing Essays. A guide for students in English and the humanities (London/New York: Routledge, 2000) — there are copies in the Skills section of the Robinson Library (Level 3)