

## UNC Asheville Writing Center

### Verbs of Attribution

Words that signal a writer is quoting, paraphrasing, or simply referring to a source are called *verbs of attribution*. Like all words, each verb has a different connotation: they can agree, disagree, be objective or not.

accepts	categorizes	declares	grants	opposes	shows
accounts for	challenges	defends	hints	points out	speculates
acknowledge	charges	defines	hypothesizes	postulates	states
addresses	cites	denies	illustrates	promotes	stresses
adds	claims	denotes	implies	pronounces	suggests
admits	commands	describes	implores	proposes	supports
admonishes	comments	dictates	indicates	propounds	supposes
advises	compares	disagrees	insinuates	proselytize	surmises
affirm	complains	discusses	insists	questions	theorizes
agrees	concedes	disputes	interprets	realizes	thinks
alleges	concludes	echoes	introduces	reasons	touts
allows	concurs	emphasizes	labels	refutes	underlines
alludes	confesses	endorses	lists	rejects	underscores
analyzes	confirms	entreats	maintains	relates	urges
answers	considers	exclaims	mentions	remarks	uses
argues	contends	exhorts	mumbles	replies	utilizes
asks	contests	explains	narrates	reports	verifies
asserts	counters	explicate	notes	responds	warns
assumes	criticizes	expresses	objects	retorts	whines
believes	deals with	extrapolates	observes	reveals	wonders
beseeches	decides	finds	offers	sees	writes

Different verbs of attribution can enhance, or in some cases, seriously misconstrue the writer's statement. Here are a few examples:

**Pronounce** - declare or announce, typically formally or solemnly

- J.K. Rowling *pronounced*, "It is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more."

**Believe** - accept (something) as true; feel sure of the truth of

- J.K. Rowling *believes* that "It is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more."

**Reveal** - make (previously unknown or secret information) known to others

- J.K. Rowling *revealed* that "It is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more."

**Whine** - a long, high-pitched complaining cry

- J.K. Rowling *whined*, "It is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more."

Notice that each of these statements has a slightly different meaning depending on what verb of attribution the writer chooses. Whine however, doesn't seem to fit the statement at all - this is an example of a *wrong* word choice. If you have any doubts about the connotations of a word, look it up in the dictionary for any implied meanings.

The Ramsey Library at UNC Asheville has multiple resources for exploring the implicit and implied meanings of words including the Oxford English Dictionary - which can be found on the library's website.