In Own Words: Quoting Sampler for Essay #1

Here’s a potential working thesis for a whole essay re/ Anne Cameron’s Foreward:

In her Foreward to *Dzelarhons*, Ann Cameron’s treatment of Klopinum’s stories and lore suggests that history told by knowledgeable elders as part of everyday life can pack a particular punch because of the immediacy, ease, and interconnectedness of the telling.

In these sample paragraphs that start to develop this thesis, look for the following:

- Opening claims in paragraphs
- Use of key words from these claims
- Set-ups of quotations
- Quotation in MLA citation system—parenthetical pg. # references at ends of sentences
- Unpacking of quotations
- Use of ellipses and brackets
- Blended quotation
- Use of colon to lead into a quotation that is a whole sentence
- The convention of writing about texts in present tense
- Consistency re/ use of voice/perspective (In this particular essay, I don’t use I or we; I use a more authoritative voice.)

Cameron’s Klopinum delivers a lesson in natural history which demonstrates all three traits of effective elders’ teachings when they arise from daily pursuits. When Klopinum shows Ann how to eat prawns, she quickly moves into the development of prawns from egg to adult. Cameron emphasizes the immediacy of this lesson as she sets the scene for it: “The prawns, pink with red stripes, still steaming from the boiling sea water [...] dripping onto the bare boards of the porch. We sat on the steps and shelled them all, ate a few dipped in butter, ate a few more” (15). This informal feast, this unhurried shelling, dipping, and munching of prawns, provides a potent moment for closer examination and understanding of the prawns themselves. The natural history lesson’s immediacy, as it flows organically from the every day event of eating, makes the learning organic—a natural outcome of the meal.

Klopinum’s ease with the telling is reflected in her comfortable word choice and simple sentence structure. As she shows Ann how to distinguish a male from a female
prawn, she points out that the females store their eggs close to the body, “cuddled up so’s the water won’t wash ‘em off too soon” (15). The verb “cuddled” gives Klopinum’s description of the prawns an intimate feel, and the everyday contractions “so’s” and “‘em” confirm that these lessons are simply part of everyday knowledge. Then Klopinum easily shifts from distinguishing the sex of the fish to a brief lesson in survival of the fittest: “Prawn has to be smart to get big. Smart ones get babies. Dumb ones are lunch for fish” (15). Her short declarative sentences, as remembered and reconstructed by Cameron, again emphasize her easy confidence with her far-ranging material and show how deeply this material registered in the young Ann.

More about brackets and ellipses:

- [The bracket] is used to indicate a small change from the original quotation. To make a quote blend grammatically into your sentence you might need to change a pronoun from I to [she], for instance, or to change a verb tense. The bracket announces this change and signals that the change you’ve made does not change the meaning of the quotation.

- Ellipses indicate you have left words out of the quotation. Three periods in a row indicate you’ve left words out of a sentence. Four periods in a row indicate you’ve left at least a whole sentence out in your quotation.

Indenting long quotations:

If the quotation takes up four or more of your essay’s lines, indent the quotation ten spaces at the left-hand margin and use your usual margin on the right. Do not put indented quotations in quotation marks—the indentation indicates it’s a quotation already.

Using long, indented quotations:

In an essay this length, only three to four pages, you probably won’t need such lengthy quotations. The longer the quotation, the more time you need to spend explaining the significance of all its contents. Try to quote judiciously and to cover basic background in your tight set-up for the quote.

Quotations within quotation:

When you’re quoting a section of text that contains dialogue or other quoted material, use single ‘marks’ around the quotation within the quotation and “double” marks around the entire quotation.