

Research Topics:

In Text Quotation of Poems and Plays in MLA Style

QUOTING ONE LINE OR LESS FROM A POEM

Only include the line number in the parenthetical citation. Be sure to make clear the author and the poem in your sentence.

In Richard Howard's "Oystering," he writes, "Lunch is served" (45).

QUOTING BETWEEN ONE AND THREE LINES FROM A POEM

Replace the line breaks with a virgule (a backslash). For a stanza break, use two virgules.

Mary Reufle's "The Hand" opens with the lines, "The teacher asks a question. / You know the answer, you suspect / you are the only one..." (1-3).

QUOTING MORE THAN THREE LINES FROM A POEM

Indent the poem one inch from the left margin. Do not use quotation marks.

Ronald Wallace's poem "The Student Theme" describes words as if they were people:
The adjectives all ganged up on the nouns,
Insistent, loud, demanding, inexact,
Their Latinate constructions flashing. The pronouns
Lost their referents: They were dangling, lacked
the stamina to follow the prepositions lead
in, on, into, to, toward, for, or from. (1-6)

QUOTING A POEM IN WHICH LINES ARE NOT ALL LEFT JUSTIFIED

Indent the poem one inch from the left margin, but try to match the original spacing of the poem.

In W. D. Snodgrass's poem "Albert Speer," the speaker sadly remembers the destruction of his designs:

The great chandelier
cranked down to the floor
its lusters crackling underfoot (74-76)

QUOTING DIALOGUE IN A VERSE DRAMA

Indent the speakers one inch from the left margin and indent all other lines an additional quarter inch. Capitalize the entire name of the speaker, and follow the name with a period. Cite the act, scene and line numbers. Try to match the formatting of the original, as you would for a poem.

Desdemona takes part in teasing Bianca, although she does not understand that she will soon find herself unable to talk.

DESDEMONA. Alas, she has no speech!
IAGO. In faith, too much.
I find it still when I have list to sleep. (2.1.115-117)

QUOTING DIALOGUE IN A PROSE DRAMA

Indent the speakers one inch from the left margin. All other lines are indented one and a quarter inches. The speakers should be written in all capital letters, followed by a period. Include stage directions as they appear in the original source. Cite the page number as you would for any other quoted prose.

Early on in the play "A Raisin in the Sun," Walter explodes when Ruth refuses to listen to his ideas:

RUTH. Eat your eggs, Walter.
WALTER. (Slams the table and jumps up) --DAMN MY EGGS--DAMN ALL THE EGGS THAT EVER WAS!
RUTH. Then go to work.
WALTER. (Looking up at her) See--I'm trying to talk to you 'bout myself--(Shaking his head with the repetition)--and all you can say is eat them eggs and go to work. (34)