



Writing Centre

Poetry Quotations

These guidelines are based on the MLA Handbook, 9th Edition. For more information, go to section 6:22 and 6.36-6.42.

A direct quote is a section of another person's work used word-for-word in your writing. When using a quotation, you must indicate that you are using someone else's work with a citation.

Poetry quotations include the page number(s) in parentheses. However, if there are line numbers printed in your source, cite those instead of page numbers.

Short Quotation:

If a quote from a poem is **three lines or less**, it is integrated into your paragraph and surrounded by quotation marks.

For example:

Poe describes the house as a "mansion of gloom" (line 62).

When you are quoting short sections from a poem, use a forward slash "/" to indicate line breaks. For a stanza break, use two forward slashes "/ /".

For example:

Varying line lengths can add emphasis: "not bothering to make official / a fuss of / her absence // these terrible ellipses" (Christakos, lines 34-37)

Sometimes you will need to change the quote to be grammatically correct in your sentence. To do this, use square brackets, "[]", to indicate what you have changed and ellipses, "...", to show omitted sections.

In Poe's poem, Roderick's family was "[devoted] to the intricacies...of musical science" (line 63).

Long (Block) Quotation:

If a quote from a poem is **four or more lines**, it is separated from your paragraph by one line and **indented one half inch** from the left margin without quotation marks. When quoting a long section of poetry, follow the formatting of the original text.

For Example:

The poem begins with dramatic imagery:

When in his sorrow, my father said, "Everybody *loose* in war,"
I knew exactly what he meant. It *may be* poets should
fight wars. *Maybe* then, metaphors—not bodies, not hillsides,
not hospitals, not schools—will explode. (Charara 80-81)