

How to Quote Shakespeare

Title and Reference Format

- ❖ Italicize the titles of plays.

Richard III or *Othello*

- ❖ Place a parenthetical reference after each quotation containing its act, scene, and line numbers separated by periods. Do *not* use page numbers.

Cite line-number ranges under 100 like this: 34–37. Above 100, repeat only the last two digits of the second number: 211–12 (but of course, 397–405 and 96–102). Place an en dash [–], not a hyphen [-], between the range numbers.

Twelfth Night (1.5.268–76)

- ❖ Use arabic numerals for all reference numbers. (Some older texts used roman numerals for act and scene references — like this: III.viii.7–34 — but modern scholars use arabic numerals.)

You may refer to a scene in the text with the act and scene numbers — in arabic numerals — separated by a period.

In 3.1, Hamlet delivers his most famous soliloquy.

Do *not* write: “In Act III, scene i, Hamlet delivers his most famous soliloquy.”

- ❖ Periods and commas *always* go inside quotation marks.

“Periods and commas,” says Dr. Womack, “*always* go inside quotation marks.”

Prose Quotations

- ❖ If a prose quotation runs four lines or less, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it in the text.

The immensely obese Falstaff tells the Prince: “When I was about thy years, Hal, I was not an eagle’s talon in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman’s thumb ring” (2.4.325–27).

- ❖ Format prose quotations that run more than four lines as block quotations. Start on a new line and set the quotation one inch in from the left margin. Do *not* add quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a block quotation.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick reflects on what he has overheard Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio say:

This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady. It seems her affections have their full bent. Love me? Why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. (2.3.217–24)

Verse Quotations

- ❖ If you quote all or part of a single line of verse, put it in quotation marks within your text.

Berowne’s pyrotechnic line “Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile” is a text-book example of antanaclasis (1.1.177).

- ❖ You may also incorporate two or three lines in the same way, using a slash with a space on each side [/] to separate them.

In his soliloquy, Claudius alludes to the story of Cain and Abel when describing his crime: “It hath the primal eldest curse upon’t, / A brother’s murder” (3.3.37–38).

- ❖ Set verse quotations of more than three lines as block quotations: start a new line and set each line one inch in from the left margin, adding no quotation marks not appearing in the original. If the quotation starts in the middle of a line of verse, reproduce it that way, don’t shift it to the left margin.

It is Jaques, in *As You Like It*, who delivers the famous speech comparing the world to a theater:

All the world’s a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. (2.7.138–42)

He then proceeds to enumerate and analyze these ages.

Dialogue Quotations

- ❖ If you quote dialogue between characters in a play, set it as a block quotation as described above. Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character's name written in all capital letters. Place a period after the name; then start the quotation. Indent any subsequent lines of the character's speech an extra quarter inch. When the dialogue shifts to a new character, start a new line. Maintain this pattern throughout the quotation.

The Christians in Venice taunt Shylock about his daughter's elopement:

SHYLOCK. She is damned for it.

SALARINO. That's certain, if the devil may be her judge.

SHYLOCK. My own flesh and blood to rebel!

SOLANIO. Out upon it, old carrion! Rebels it at these years?

SHYLOCK. I say my daughter is my flesh and my blood.

SALARINO. There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory, more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish.

(3.1.29–38)

- ❖ If speakers share a verse line, indent the second half of the shared verse line to the right of the first half to visually maintain the line.

From their first conversation, Lady Macbeth pushes her husband towards murder:

MACBETH. My dearest love,
Duncan comes here tonight.

LADY MACBETH. And when goes hence?

MACBETH. Tomorrow, as he purposes.

LADY MACBETH. O, never
Shall sun that morrow see. (1.5.57–60)