

Quoting the Bard



“I do desire we may
be better strangers.”

If you are writing a paper about a Shakespeare play, you need to know the rules that apply to direct quotations, citations, and documentation. MLA format is very specific about how you handle material from a dramatic text (script/play), and you should try to implement these requirements in your essay or research paper. Please use the following guidelines, which are based on the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook* (2016):

QUOTATIONS

Brief Quotation: If you are quoting a portion of a line, simply insert it into your sentence as you would a normal quotation.

For example: The witches indicate that Macbeth is no longer a good man, noting, as he enters, that “something wicked this way comes” (*Macbeth* 4.1.45).

Brief Quotation of Multiple Lines: If you are quoting more than one line from the play (from the same speaker), you must indicate line breaks, as you would with a poetry quotation, by using a forward slash mark (/).

For example: The second witch notes that Macbeth is no longer a good man when she declares, “By the pricking of my thumbs, / something wicked this way comes” (*Macbeth* 4.1.44-45).

Longer Quotation: If you are quoting a portion of the play that will take up more than four lines in your paper and that is from a single speaker in the play, you will need to set

the quotation off by indenting lines and including them as they appeared in the original text.

For example: In his final speech, Malcolm indicates that he will try to live up to his father's name as he takes the crown and declares,

Call home our exiled friends abroad
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny,
Producing forth the cruel ministers
Of this dead butcher and his fiendlike queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life—this, and what needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace
We will perform in measure, time, and place:
So thanks to all at once and to each one,
Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone. (*Macbeth* 5.8.71-80)

Dialogue Quotation: If you quote dialogue between two or more characters in a play, set the quotation off from your text by indenting each line. Begin each part of the dialogue with the character's name (in capital letters), followed by a period and the words spoken by that character.

For example: Early in the play, Macbeth expresses doubt concerning their plan, indicating that his resolve may be faltering.

MACBETH. We will proceed no further in this business....I
dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is
none.

LADY MACBETH. What beast was't then that made you break
this enterprise to me? When you durst do it, then you were a

man. (*Macbeth* 1.7.31, 46-50)

However, Lady Macbeth calls her husband's manhood into question and goads him into following through with the murder plot.

CITATIONS

Citations: Give the title of the play, followed by division (act and scene) and line numbers.

For example: (*Macbeth* 4.1.44-45)

DOCUMENTATION

Works Cited Entry (Print): Give the playwright's name, the title of the play, the name(s) of other contributor(s), the publisher's name, and the year it was published.

For example:

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Edited by Kenneth Muir, Methuen & CO, 1975.

Works Cited Entry (E-Book): Give the playwright's name, the title of the play, the name(s) of other contributor(s), the name of the device, the publisher's name, and the year it was published.

For example:

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Edited by Kenneth Muir, Kindle ed., Methuen & CO, 2007.

Works Cited Entry (Website): Give the playwright's name, the title of the play, the title of the website, the name(s) of other contributor(s), the name of the publisher, the publication date, and the URL:

For example:

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. *Folger Digital Texts*, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2017, folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=p7.