

Shakespeare I
Mulready
Style Sheet for Shakespeare Essays

Here are the basics for formatting your essays and citing the language of Shakespeare using proper MLA citation format. This will give you most the information you need, but for a full discussion, see the *MLA Handbook*, 7th Edition, pages 92-105. Please note that your papers must have a “Works Cited” page. See section V at the end of this document for information about preparing that page.

1. **Titles of the Plays.** Play titles should always be *Italicized*, and not “put in quotations marks” or Underlined.
2. **Formatting.** Essays should use a 12 point font (Times New Roman is great), and have 1” space on the top, bottom, left, and right margins. In Microsoft Word you will find margin settings on the “File” menu in the “Page Setup” window.
3. **Title.** All essays should have a title, centered and placed before your text.
4. **Name and Page Numbers.** In addition to your full name on the first page, your last name and page number should appear on each subsequent page. This is easily done in Microsoft Word—in the “View” menu, click “View Header and Footer.” You can then type your last name and “insert page number.” This will now appear on each page.
5. **Citing Drama**

Since Shakespeare wrote most of his drama in verse, unless you are citing a prose passage (**see II below**) or dialogue between two characters (**see III, below**), you should follow the directions from the MLA for citing poetry. In addition to line numbers, you should also include act and scene numbers in your parenthetical citations, using Arabic numerals (not Roman) as follows: (1.2.122-23).

“If you quote part or all of a single line of verse that does not require special emphasis, put it in quotation marks within your text. You may also incorporate two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side (/) to separate them” (*MLA Handbook* 95). You should add the line number from the poem in parenthesis after the quotation mark and before the period. If the author’s name is not mentioned in your sentence, add that in the parenthesis as well.

For example:

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the title character compares Denmark to “an unweeded garden / That grows to seed” (1.2.135-36).

or

Hamlet contains language of uncontrolled growth and corruption, as Hamlet describes Denmark as “an unweeded garden / That grows to seed” where “things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely (Shakespeare 1.2.135-37).

“Verse quotations of *more than three lines* should begin on a new line. Unless the quotation involves unusual spacing, *indent one inch* (or ten spaces) from the left margin and *double-space between lines*, adding no quotation marks that do not appear in the original. A parenthetical reference for a verse quotation set off from the text follows the last line of the quotation” (*MLA Handbook* 95, emphasis added). Do not center, bold, or add any other formatting to the lines.

For example:

Shakespeare’s Hamlet sets up a number of comparisons between the state of Denmark and gardens or flowers. For instance, in Hamlet’s speech to his mother in her closet, he commands her:

Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what’s past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost o’er the weeds
To make them ranker. (3.4.140-44)

DO NOT combine the lines of Shakespeare’s dramatic verse into prose as in the following:

Shakespeare’s Hamlet sets up a number of comparisons between the state of Denmark and gardens or flowers. For instance, in Hamlet’s speech to his mother in her closet, he commands her, “Confess yourself to heaven; Repent what’s past, avoid what is to come, And do not spread the compost o’er the weeds To make them ranker” (3.4.140-44).”

6. Citing Prose in Drama

If you are citing a section of prose from one of Shakespeare’s plays, do not separate lines with slash (/) marks. If the passage runs longer than four typed lines on your word processor, indent the passage one inch and double space it.

For example:

In *Hamlet*, the jester Yorick’s skull becomes the centerpiece of one of Hamlet’s most famous speeches:

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio—a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred my imagination is! ... Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know

not how oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? (5.1.171-177)

(Note that I have used ellipsis points (three spaced periods: ...) to mark a place where I omitted a sentence. You should do the same any time you take out a word, phrase or sentence(s) from the text you are quoting.)

7. Citing Dialogue

“If you quote dialogue between two or more characters in a play, set the quotation off from your text. Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character’s name indented one inch (ten spaces) from the left margin and written in all capital letters (e.g.: HAMLET). Follow the name with a period, and start the quotation. Indent all subsequent lines in that character’s speech an additional quarter inch (or three spaces)” (*MLA Handbook* 96).

When the dialogue shifts to another character, start a new line indented one inch from the left margin. Maintain this pattern throughout the entire quotation.

For example:

BENVOLIO. ... What sadness lengthens Romeo’s hours?

ROMEO. Not having that which, having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO. In love.

ROMEO. Out. (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.1.156-59)

8. Works Cited

Following MLA format, your essays should have a separate page with the words “Works Cited” centered and at the top of the page (even if the text is the only thing you are citing). Entries should be alphabetized, double-spaced, and formatted as follows.

For Example:

Works Cited

“Rank, adj. and adv.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Web. 4 Apr.

2000

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. The Norton Shakespeare. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. 2nd ed.

New York: Norton, 2008. 1696-1794. Print.