

Incorporating Quotations
(Does not follow MLA guidelines)

1. Do not overuse quotations. The style of your writing will be better if you incorporate quoted phrases into your own sentence structure rather than writing a sentence and then quoting a sentence or poetic line.

Ineffective

Richard Cory was very polite. “He was a gentleman from sole to crown.” Also he was good-looking, even regal-looking—“clean favored, and imperially slim.”

Effective

Richard Cory was polite, “a gentleman from sole to crown.” Like a handsome king he was “clean favored, and imperially slim.”

2. Avoid having two quotations in a row. Your own commentary should bridge the two.

Ineffective

Richard had everything going for him. “He was a gentleman from sole to crown.” “And he was rich—yes, richer than a king.”

Effective

Richard had everything going for him. Not only was he a “gentleman from sole to crown”; he was also richer than a king.”

3. Work the quotation comfortably into your sentence structure.

Ineffective

“Darkened by the gloomiest of trees” shows just how frightening the forest looked.

Effective

The forest, “darkened by the gloomiest of trees,” was a frightening place.

4. Longer quotations (more than two lines of verse or four lines of prose) should be set off from your paragraph in display form: single-spaced and centered without quotation marks.

Dickinson describes the numbness that comes with the shock of the loss of a loved one:

The nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs—
The stiff Heart questions was it He,
that bore,
And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

5. Separate lines of poetry running within your sentences with a slash (/), and preserve the capitalization of words at the beginning of the line.

The speaker notes that the bruised heart
of the mourner wonders “was it He, that
bore, / And Yesterday, or Centuries before?”

6. You may alter the punctuation and capitalization of a quotation to conform to the

needs of your sentence structure, as long as you do not alter the meaning of the lines.

He was a gentleman from sole to crown, Clean favored, and imperially slim.”

Richard Cory, “clean favored, and imperially slim,” was from head to toe a gentleman .”

7. If, for clarity or sentence structure, you must alter a quotation, place the alteration in brackets

With Heaven and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil.

1. Goodman Brown claims that “with Heaven above and Faith below, [he] will yet stand firm against the devil.”
2. Goodman Brown hoped that “with Heaven above and Faith below, [he would] yet stand firm against the devil.”

8. If you omit material in order to be succinct , mark the omission by three periods (called an ellipsis) with a space between each (...). **Note:** There is no need to use these routinely at the beginning end of your quotations. It is understood that you are lifting passages from a longer work.

Montresor tells us that when it came to “painting and gemmery, Fortunato . . . was a quack.”

9. Be sure to name the source of the quotation correctly.

In nonnarrative poetry (poetry in which characters do not appear in a plot) it is correct to say “The speaker says . . .” not “The poet says . . .”

In a story with a narrator, it is correct to say “The narrator says . . .” when quoting passages of narration, not “The author says . . .”

Identify characters as you quote them.

In Thomas Hardy’s “Channel Firing,” God answers the people in their graves with Ha, ha. It will be warmer when / I blow the trumpet.”

When quoting dialogue between characters in a play, set it off and begin a new line as you quote each character. Place the character’s name in front of his line.

Later in the play Hamlet confronts his mother:

HAMLET: Now, mother, what’s the matter?

QUEEN: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Adapted from: Sullivan, Jenny N. *Writing Themes about Literature*. 3rd Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983.

