

How to Quote Verse

Title and Reference Format

- ❖ Italicize the titles of books or long poems published as books.

Leaves of Grass or *The Rape of the Lock*

- ❖ Use quotation marks for the titles of works published within larger works — like short poems.

“Song of Myself” or “Kubla Khan”

- ❖ Refer to untitled poems by their first line.

“Go and catch a falling star” or “So, we’ll go no more a-roving”

- ❖ Refer to numbered poems, like sonnets in a sonnet sequence, by their number.

Sonnet 20 or Canto 45

- ❖ Place a parenthetical reference after each verse quotation containing its line numbers. 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.

Use arabic, *not* roman, numerals to cite all numbered sections and subsections of a poem (books, stanzas, lines, and so on).

The Faerie Queene (1.6.334–42) or *Paradise Lost* (4.634–58)

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

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

Brief Verse Quotations

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

The line “Quoth the raven, ‘Nevermore’” becomes a haunting refrain in Poe’s “The Raven.”

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

Donne opens the second stanza with an impassioned plea: “Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare, / Where we almost, nay more than married are” (10–11).

- ❖ Use two slashes [//] to indicate a stanza break in a quotation.

Keats often makes masterfully subtle use of alliteration: “And with thee fade into the forest dim: // Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget / What thou among the leaves hast never known” (20–22).

Block Quotations

- ❖ Set verse quotations of more than three lines should 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.

The parenthetical reference for a block quotation follows the last line of the quotation. If the parenthetical reference won't fit on the line, put it on a new line, flush with the *right* page margin.

Emily Dickinson's ballad meter quatrain evokes the arbitrary cruelty of the natural world:

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy Flower
The Frost beheads it at its play —
In accidental power — (1–4)

- ❖ When a verse quotation begins in the middle of a line, reproduce it that way, do not shift it to the left margin.

Ben Jonson proclaims Shakespeare's unique position in English literature:

I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further to make thee room:
Thou art a monument without a tomb (19–22)

- ❖ A line too long to fit within the right margin should continue on the next line with the continuation indented an additional quarter inch. You may reduce the indentation of a verse quotation to less than one inch from the left margin to keep the lines free of this additional indentation.

Walt Whitman often employs anaphora in his long free-verse lines:

Hours continuing long, sore and heavy hearted,
Hours of the dusk, when I withdraw to a lonesome and
unfrequented spot, seating myself, leaning my face in my
hands;
Hours sleepless, deep in the night, when I go forth, speeding
swiftly the country roads, or through the city streets, or
pacing miles and miles, stifling plaintive cries;
Hours discouraged, distracted—for one I cannot content
myself without, soon I saw him content himself without
me. (1–4)

- ❖ Reproduce the exact spatial arrangement of the original lines — including their indentation and the spacing within and between them — as accurately as you can.

Through a combination of enjambment, line length, and indentation Marianne Moore creates incredibly subtle effects of emphasis and rhythm in “To a Chameleon”:

Hid by the august foliage and fruit of the grape-vine
twine
your anatomy
round the pruned and polished stem,
Chameleon.
Fire laid upon
an emerald as long as
the Dark King’s massy
one,
could not snap the spectrum up for food as you have done.
(1–10)

Ellipses

- ❖ Use an ellipsis with a space on each side [...] to indicate the omission of words or phrases from within a verse quotation.

In Hardy's "The Ruined Maid," the speaker feels jealous of the woman she meets: "I wish I had feathers ... And a delicate face" (21–22).

- ❖ Indicate the omission of a line or more in the middle of a block quotation with a row of spaced periods roughly the length of a full line of the quoted poem.

The closing stanza of "The Tyger" echoes the opening stanza almost exactly:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

.

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? (1–4, 21–24)