

How to Quote Verse

- ❖ 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 numbered poems, like sonnets in a sonnet sequence, by number:

Sonnet 20

- ❖ Refer to an untitled poem by its first line:

“Go and catch a falling star” or “Because I could not stop for Death”

- ❖ Cite line numbers up to 100 like this: 34-37; above 100, you repeat only the last two figures: 211-12 (but of course, 398-405 and 96-109). Use arabic numerals rather than roman numerals for citations of all numbered sections and subsections (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.”

- ❖ 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).

- ❖ Verse quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line. Unless the quotation involves unusual spacing, indent each line one inch 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; a parenthetical reference that will not fit on the line should begin a new line, flush with the right margin of the page:

Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room" is rich in evocative detail:

It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines. (6-10)

- ❖ 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 the quotation to less than one inch from the left margin if doing so will eliminate the need for such continuation.

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)

- ❖ 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)

- ❖ If the spatial arrangement of the original lines, including indentation and spacing within and between them, is unusual, reproduce it as accurately as possible:

E. E. Cummings concludes the poem with a vivid description of a carefree scene, reinforced by the carefree form of the lines themselves:

it's
 spring
 and
 the
 goat-footed
 ballonMan whistles
 far
 and
 wee (16-24)

- ❖ Indicate the omission of words and phrases from quotations of poetry by three or four spaced periods:

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 poetry quotation set off from the text by a line of spaced periods approximately the length of a complete 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)