MLA (8th Edition) In-Text Documentation: Drama Quotations

How quotations from plays are handled depends on a number of factors. Follow the steps below for guidance on which style to use:

1. Are you quoting dialogue between two or more characters?
   a. Yes – use style A as your guide.
   b. No – proceed to question # 2.

2. You are quoting dialogue from a single character. How is the play written?
   a. In verse (i.e. Shakespeare and the like) – proceed to question # 3.
   b. In “regular” speech – proceed to question # 4.

3. You are quoting dialogue from a single character and the play is written in verse. How long is the quotation?
   a. 3 lines or less – use style B1 as your guide.
   b. More than 3 lines – use style B2 as your guide.

4. You are quoting dialogue from a single character and the play is written in regular speech. How long is the quotation?
   a. 4 lines or less – use style C1 as your guide.
   b. More than 4 lines – use style C2 as your guide.

Style Guidelines

Style A (Dialogue between two or more characters)

- The quotation will be done in a block format, double-spaced, with no quotation marks.
- Start with the first character’s name indented half an inch from the left margin and written in all caps (ex. HAMLET).
- Follow the name with a period, and start the quotation.
- Indent all subsequent lines in that character’s speech an additional quarter inch (.25).
- When the dialogue shifts to another character, start a new line indented half an inch from the left margin, and proceed as you did with the first character.
- End the quote with page number(s) for plays written in regular speech; use act, scene, and line numbers for plays written in verse.
Example:

In Fallow's *Darkness Falls*, the lines between real and imaginary begin to blur:

ELLA. You saw nothing in those woods. Nothing real anyway.

EVE. I saw her. She is real. How can you say that after all I've been through these past months? (212)

**Style B** (Dialogue from a single character from plays written in verse, like Shakespeare, will follow the rules for quoting poetry.)

**Style B1 – quotations of 3 lines or less**

- Quotations of 3 lines or less are incorporated into the text of the paper using a slash with a space on each side (/) to separate the lines.
- The lines should be enclosed in quotation marks.
- Use the act, scene, and line numbers, rather than page numbers, at the end of the quote. Use Arabic numerals, not Roman numerals, and separate the numbers with periods.

Example:

Shakespeare's Hamlet seems resolute at first when he asserts, "Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love, / May sweep to my revenge" (1.5.29-31).

**Style B2 – quotations of more than 3 lines**

- The quotation will be done in a block format, double-spaced, with no quotation marks.
- Set off the quotation by indenting each line half an inch from the left margin.
- Do not use slash marks at the end of each line.
- Use the act, scene, and line numbers, rather than page numbers, at the end of the quote. Use Arabic numerals, not Roman numerals, and separate the numbers with periods.
Example:

Shakespeare’s Romeo expounds on his love for Juliet in vivid detail:

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief,

That thou her maid art far more fair than she. (2.2.2-6)

Style C  (Dialogue from a single character from plays written in regular speech will follow the rules for quoting prose.)

Style C1 – quotations of 4 lines or less

- Quotations running 4 typed lines or less should be placed in quotation marks and incorporated into the text of the paper.
- Use page number(s) at the end of the quote.

Example:

In Thornton Wilder’s Our Town, the Stage Manager cautions Emily about reliving the past: “And as you watch it, you see the thing that they—down there—never know. You see the future. You know what’s going to happen afterwards” (91).

Style C2 – quotations of more than 4 lines

- The quotation will be done in a block format, double-spaced, with no quotation marks.
- Set off the quotation by indenting each line half an inch from the left margin.
- Use page number(s) at the end of the quote.
Example:

In Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom provides many of the back story details by speaking directly to the audience:

> Across the alley from us was the Paradise Dance Hall. On evenings in spring the windows and doors were open and the music came outdoors. Sometimes the lights were turned out except for a large glass sphere that hung from the ceiling. It would turn slowly about and filter the dusk with delicate rainbow colors. Then the orchestra played a waltz or a tango, something that had a slow and sensuous rhythm. (425)

**The guidelines found in this handout are based on formatting described on pages 75-80 of the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed. and on pages 467-468 of *Rules for Writers*, 8th ed with 2016 MLA Update.**
