**Quoting Poetry**

Created by Amy Chavers, according to the *MLA Handbook,* 5th ed.

When using quotations from poetry in your own writing, make sure you use quotation marks to frame the work being quoted.

Example:

Bradstreet frames the poem with a sense of morality: “All things within this fading world hath end” (1).

If you are quoting two or three consecutive lines of poetry, you should separate each line with a slash mark: /.

Example:

Cullen concludes, “Of all the things that happened there / That’s all that I remember” (11-12).

Please notice the spacing around the slash mark. The *MLA Handbook* shows spaces on both sides of the slash mark. *The Chicago Manual of Style*, however, prefers no spacing on either side.

Notice in the examples that the line numbers are put in parentheses directly following the closing quotation mark. The word “line” or an “I” is not necessary; simply put the number(s) of the corresponding lines from the text being quoted. Also notice that the period is placed after the closing parenthesis. If you are quoting a line of poetry that ends in a question mark, this punctuation will go inside the quotation mark, and a period will still follow the closing parenthesis.

Example:

“What need you / To follow in a house where twice so many / Have a command to tend you?” (4-6).

Quotations of 4 or more lines of poetry should

~begin on a new line

~be indented 10 spaces from the left margin

~be double spaced

~not have quotation marks

~have a period (or ending punctuation mark) after the final word of the quoted poetry, before the parentheses with the page number.

Example:

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)

When quoting a poem with unusual spacing or spatial arrangements, reproduce the lines as accurately as possible.

Example:

e.e. cummings concludes the poem with this valid description of a carefree scene, reinforced by the carefree form of the lines themselves:

it’s

spring

and

the

goat-footed

balloonMan whistles

far

and

wee (16-24)

If you are quoting a piece of a poem that begins in the middle of a line, the partial line should be positioned where it is in the original text and should not be shifted to the left margin.

Example:

In a poem about Thlmas Hardy (“T.H.”), Molly Holden recalls her encounter with a “young dog fox” one morning:

I remember

he glanced at me in just that way, independent

and unabashed, the handsome sidelong look

that went round and about but never directly

met my eyes, for that would betray his soul.

He was not being sly, only careful. (43-48)

One last note…

If you do not mention the author’s last name in the sentence introducing your quotation, you should place the last name in the parentheses with the line numbers, and no comma is necessary.

Example:

“All things within this fading world hath end” (Bradstreet 1).