

Using Quotations from Poetry

When using quotations from poetry, there are a few different ways to punctuate and denote these quotations. In poetry, the way the words are laid out is just as important as the actual words. Take care to reproduce the spaces as accurately as possible. Introduce the quote, giving context if necessary. Also, if a long poem is marked with line numbers, give line numbers versus page numbers. If a poem is one page or less in length, no line numbers are needed. Since the same poem is often available in more than one book, such as anthologies, collected works, etc., the citation should help the reader locate the lines, no matter what book they find the poem in.

Introducing Quotes

When introducing quotes from poems, be careful not to confuse the speaker of the poem with the author of the poem.

In A.R. Ammon's poem "Corsons Inlet," the speaker reminisces about a walk, "the walk liberating, I was released from forms" (43).

Formatting Short Quotes

As with prose works, quotations of three lines or less should be incorporated into the sentence normally. Separate lines with a space and a slash (/). Be careful to reproduce any extra spaces between words.

Snyder's metaphor seems to be the "knowing" of nature," "you know me / a little. A lot more than I / know you" (31).

Formatting Longer Quotes

Similarly to prose quotations, quotes of four lines or longer should be set off from the text and indented. The quotation should be double spaced. Again, be careful to reproduce any special spacing within the lines.

Consider one of Armantrout's early poems, "View" from *Extremities*:

Not the city lights. We want

-the moon-

The moon

none of our own doing! (8)

Note: Refer to authors the same way as when citing prose works. After using the author's full name the first time, refer to the author by their last name. The same rule applies for characters in poems. Put the titles of individual poems in quotation marks, like a chapter in a book or article title. Long, book length poems and poetry book titles should appear underlined or italicized.

Note: These guidelines are for MLA formatted papers, the most common style used for literature.