

RULES FOR CITING POETRY

- 1. The title of a poem is always enclosed in quotation marks, NOT underlined or italicized.**

Example: "Ode to a Nightingale"

- 2. When quoting or paraphrasing from a poem, always capitalize whatever is capitalized in the original, break lines just as they are broken in the original.**
- 3. If you quote two or three lines of poetry, separate each line with a slash (with a space before and after the slash) and enclose the entire quotation in quotation marks, with the appropriate citation.**

Example: Reflecting on the "incident" in Baltimore, Cullen concludes, "Of all the things that happened there / That's all that I remember" (lines 11-12).

Note that in the example, the author's name is omitted from the citation, because it is specified in the text.

- 4. If you are quoting three or more lines, it is best to indent 10 lines and write the quote without quotation marks, single-spaced, with the line citation immediately following. Be sure to make the poet and title clear, to punctuate, and break lines exactly as the original as been.**

Example: Elizabeth Bishops'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. (lines 6-10)

Be careful about using longer quotes. Always use only enough of a quote to make your point in a concise manner

5. You will be writing a paper in which multiple poems will be cited, but they are all written by the same poet.

You must make the poet's name clear early in your paper. Then use a keyword or two from the title followed by the line number to identify individual poems. A comma is not necessary, because the quotation marks clearly identify the poem's title, so there is no confusion about what the word "line" refers to.

Example: Kooser writes of a terminally ill, saying "Grace / fills the clean mold of this moment" ("Cancer" lines 16-17). In contrast, his aunt "lived / seventy years with a ball / of compulsion closed in her fist" ("Carrie" lines 5-7).

6. If you are writing about more than one poet, be certain to identify the name of the poet in your text or in parentheses following the quotation. Also, be certain to give the line reference in parentheses following your quotation.

Example: "For the Anniversary of My Death" begins with the suggestion that after death, the soul starts a journey through time "Like the beam of a lightless star" (Merwin, line 5)

Notice that there is a comma between the name and the word "line".

In short, be sure to quote the lines of poem exactly as they appear in the original, and make certain the poet's name, the title of the poem and the line numbers of that poem are all clear to the reader.