

# Citing Drama

## Style and Formatting Guide for Citing a Work of Drama

The following information is an adapted version of the style and formatting guidelines found in the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed. (2016), published by the Modern Language Association. This sheet is to serve as a ready-reference; more in-depth descriptions can be found in the handbook.

### IN-TEXT CITATIONS

- Quotations and paraphrases from works of drama, or plays, are parenthetically cited based on textual division (such as act, scene, book, and/or part) (1.3.4).
- If there is an author listed, use the author's last name. In the absence of an author, the title of the work should be used in an abbreviated form.
- Numbers are usually written in Arabic numerals for acts and scenes.
  - ⇒ (5.165) refers to Act 5, line 165 of a play.
- However, some instructors may prefer the use of Roman numerals for acts and scenes.
  - ⇒ (IV.i.22-36) refers to act 4, scene 1, lines 22 through 36 of Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*.
- Periods are used to separate the various numbers presented in the citation.
- Titles of dramatic works are italicized when mentioned in the text and should be abbreviated in citations.
  - ⇒ *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* is one of Shakespeare's most enduring plays.
  - ⇒ (*Tragedy*)

In-text citations should reflect the format of the source listed in the Works Cited section. For example, if the source from the Works Cited section is italicized, it should also be italicized in the in-text citation.

## Quoting Drama

Use quotation marks when you are quoting one character and the passage is three lines or less, as shown in this sample essay on Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll House* (1.3.4):

Nora makes a fruitless attempt to reassure Torvald before she leaves when she says, "I've heard that when a wife deserts a husband's house just as I'm doing, then the law frees him from all responsibility. In any case, I'm freeing you from responsibility. ... There has to be absolute freedom for us both" (3.442-445).

### Notes:

It is not necessary to use ellipses at the beginnings or endings of quotes or paraphrases to indicate that words have been omitted. For more information on quoting fiction and the use of ellipses and brackets, please see our "Style and Formatting Guide for Direct Quotations."

If you quote more than one character or more than three lines, set off the quotation by indenting one inch. Begin with the character's name typed in all capitals followed by a period. Indent subsequent lines a further 1/4 inch:

Mrs. Linde pressures Nora to reveal the source of her loan. Nora, however, remains resolute:

MRS. LINDE. Now don't try to hide it, Nora. You think I can't guess who loaned you the forty  
-eight hundred crowns?

NORA. Are you out of your mind? How could you think such a thing? (2.201-206)

Notes:

In the case of a drama written in verse-form, the rules for quoting poetry would apply. For more information on quoting poetry, please see our "Citing Poetry" guide.

If a play is not divided into chapters or books (i.e. Aeschylus' trilogy *The Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, and The Eumenides*), you should cite just the line numbers.

## Works Cited

Note:

All Works Cited entries are double-spaced. Please check the MLA Handbook for formatting the citations of electronic texts.

**A PLAY IN AN ANTHOLOGY:**

**Author's Name. Title of Work. Title of Anthology, Editors/Translators, Publishing House, Year, pp. Page Numbers.**

Marlowe, Christopher. *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. *The Norton Anthology: World Masterpieces*, edited by Maynard Mack, et al, Norton, 1992. pp. 1958-2010.

**A FREE-STANDING PLAY:**

**Author's Name. Title of Work. Publishing House, Year.**

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*. Theater Communications Group, 1992.