Internal Citations – Poetry (MLA Format)

Purpose: Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to quote poetry within a paper using MLA format. This DLA should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

To Begin: Read the attached handout entitled “Quoting Poetry within a Paper using ML Documentation” from Shepherd University.

Next: Refer to the handout and to Sylvia Plath’s poem, “Metaphors” (below) to answer the following questions.

Metaphors
(by Sylvia Plath, 1932-1963)

I’m a riddle in nine syllables
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf’s big with its yeasty rising.
Money’s new minted in this fat purse.
I’m a means, a stage, in a cow in calf.
I’ve eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there’s no getting off.

1. On the lines below, indicate the correct formatting and parenthetical citation for lines 2-4 of “Metaphors”:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

2. On the lines below, following the single phrase that has already been writing for you, indicate the correct formatting and parenthetical citation for lines 4-7 of “Metaphors.”

Although the tone of the poem is somewhat ambivalent, the speaker’s positive feelings are conveyed most clearly in the following lines:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

If you have any questions at this point, feel free to review your work with an instructor or tutor. Otherwise, complete the DLA by answering the questions on the reverse.

3. According to the handout, when should you NOT use an ellipsis (…)?

_________________________________________

4. According to the handout, when SHOULD you use an ellipsis?

_________________________________________
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5. Cite lines 1-2 and 7-8 (that is, omit lines 3-6) from the following poem. (Refer to the handout under the section, “If you remove one or more full line…”)

Smile
(by N. Scott Momaday, b. 1934)

What did we say to each other
that now we are as the deer
who walk in single file
with heads high
with ears forward
with eyes watchful
with hooves always placed on firm ground
in whose limbs there is latent flight

6. How do you cite several single words or phrases from a poem when including them in a single sentence?

7. If you have any questions, please write them below, prior to reviewing your work with a tutor or instructor.

Attach a confirmation sheet or get a signature below:

Instructor Signature: ___________________________ Date: _______________________

Return this completed, signed sheet to your instructor.
Quoting Poetry within a Paper using MLA Documentation

(MLA Handbook, 7th Edition)
Updated 2009

The rules for poetry differ from the rules for quoting prose in two key ways:

- Poetry requires writers to cite line numbers not page numbers.
- Poetry requires writers to keep line breaks in tact.

**Quoting 1, 2 or 3 lines of poetry.** You can quote three or fewer lines of poetry without having to place the lines in a block quote. Use quotation marks. Use a slash to indicate the break between lines. Put the line numbers in parentheses. Place the period at the end of the line number(s):

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Heaney directly compares poetry writing to the digging his ancestors did: "Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it" (29-31).
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**Quoting 4 or more lines of poetry.** If you quote four or more lines of poetry, you need to block indent the poem ten spaces on the left margin.

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The author, David Bottoms, is wise to the fact that men often use sports to communicate their feelings. The persona of the poem, however, takes years to realize his father's message. Once he realizes the importance of sports to their relationship, he sends a message back to his father:

and I never learned what you were laying down.
Like a hand brushed across the bill of a cap,
let this be the sign
I'm getting a grip on the sacrifice. (20-23)
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**Do not use ellipses if you start quoting a poem midline.** If you want to start quoting in the middle of a line of poetry, just add indentions to indicate the text is only a partial line. Do **not** use ellipses points ( . . ).

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McDonald paints a picture of a family in pain, but he uses images that usually show up in cozier circumstances, such as children reading the comics:
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At dawn
we folded the quilts
and funnies, crept softly
through our chores. (13-16)

If you remove words from the middle of a line, DO use an ellipses to represent the missing text.

As a boy, the persona visited his grandfather in the fields: "Once I carried him milk. . . / He straightened up / To drink it" (Heaney 19-21).

If you remove one or more full line, use a line of ellipses to indicate the omission.

The persona in Hayden's poem would wake to hear the fire his father started before dawn:

Sundays too my father got up early
. . . . . . . . . . . . . .
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress. (1, 6-8)

Put line numbers after citing several single words. If you quote several words or phrases from throughout a poem, list the line numbers after each word.

Roethke uses a variety of words in "My Papa's Waltz" that indicate physical violence, words such as "death" (3), "battered" (9), "scraped" (12), "beat" (13), and "hard" (14).

For one word, put the line number at the end. Just as when quoting a single word of a prose work, put line numbers at the end of a sentence if quoting only one word.

When Heaney uses a simile to compare his pen to a "gun," he creates a startling image (2).