

MLA Format: Citing Poetry

According to the MLA Handbook:

If you quote part or all of a single line of verse that does not require special emphasis, put it in quotation marks within your text. You may also incorporate two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side to separate them (/).

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

← line in the poem

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

Verse quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line:

Ex: 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)

← Notice there are no quotation marks around these types of longer quotes.

When a verse quotation begins in the middle of a line, the partial line should be positioned where it is in the original and not shifted to the left margin:

Ex: In a poem on Thomas 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)