

## Using Quotes to Support Your Thesis

When you are writing an essay about literature, many times you are going to want to paraphrase or sum up what is going on in the story or novel using your own words. But when you are trying to prove a specific point about the work, quite often you will want to use direct quotes from the text to illustrate your point. Things to remember about using quotes in your essay:

1. Always establish a context for your quotes. Tell your reader what is going on in the story at the point from where your quote is taken. If you are quoting dialogue, tell the reader who is speaking, who is being spoken to, and the situation or purpose of the conversation.
2. Establish the relevancy of your quote after you have presented it. You know what this quote means to you and how it supports your argument, but your reader doesn't. Never assume that a quote explains itself; quotes cannot stand alone. Tell your reader what we should see in the quote you have chosen or what this quote illustrates that will support your point and ultimately your thesis.
3. The length of your quote determines the citation punctuation. Quotes 4 lines or shorter continue as part of the paragraph but are set off by quotation marks. The end of the last sentence of the quote is followed by a parenthetical citation (MLA style) that indicates the author's last name and the page from which the quote is taken.

Do not use quotation marks around **quotes longer than 4 lines**. Instead, start on the next line and indent the whole passage one inch (10 spaces) from the left hand margin; the quote still aligns with the right justification of the rest of the text of your paper (no indentation on the right). Any internal punctuation stays the same. Parenthesis with the author's name and page number follows the end quote.

In both cases, quotes remain double spaced like the rest of your essay; do not single space quotes.

See Chapter 7 of your anthology and the sample student essays throughout the text for examples.

4. Use single quote marks when quoting dialogue within a quote. These go inside the double quote marks of the whole quotation and indicate when characters are speaking.  
When you are quoting dialogue over 4 lines long and/or more than one character is speaking, you must indent the quote and start a new line for the dialogue of the each character. Because you are indenting, you retain the regular punctuation (double quotes) and do not need to use single quote marks.

Example from *On the Road*:

The other side of Des Moines a cruising car came after us with the siren growling, with order to pull over. "Now what?"  
The cop came out. "Were you in an accident coming in?"  
"Accident? We broke a guy's waterbag at the junction."  
"He says he was hit and run by a bunch in a stolen car." This . . . so surprised us we laughed. (Kerouac 236)

5. Never put two quotes back to back. Remember, you need to explain each quote, so two "naked" quotes should never be right next to each other.