**MLA Formatting for Quoting Shakespeare**

Below are some rules to follow whenever you quote the words, lines, or title of a Shakespearian play. Pay attention to the examples.

**RULE 1: *Whenever you mention the title of the play, underline it.***

Shakespeare's *Othello* is a story of interracial marriage, sexual jealousy, and murder.

**RULE 2: *Whenever you quote a word or phrase that appears in the play, put quotation marks around it and* integrate *the quoted material within your own sentence.***

Macbeth realizes that the witch is talking to him when she addresses him as "Thane of Cawdor" after the battle.

**RULE 3:Whenever you quote a phrase that begins on one line but ends on the next, indicate where the first line stops by using *a slash mark*.**

At the height of the fight between Brutus and Cassius, we see that Brutus has taken all he can when he says, "Must I stand and crouch/ under your testy humor?" (4.4.45-46).

**RULE 4:Whenever you quote two or more whole lines from the play, do not use quotation marks. Instead, separate and indent the lines within your paragraph. The special way the lines are "set-off" from the rest of the paragraph substitutes for the quotation marks. When several lines are set off in this way, you should copy them exactly as they are in the play, and indent from both margins.**

Even Portia, one of Shakespeare's most admirable women, condemns   
herself and her entire gender when she says,  
O Constancy, be strong upon my side!  
Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!  
I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.  
How hard it is for women to keep counsel!   
before sending her servant to the Senate for gossip (2.4.5-9).

**RULE 5:When your quotes express a complete idea, whether they are only two lines or more, refer to the specific Act, Scene, and Lines that you are quoting and put this information in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the quote. See both Rules 3 and 4 for examples of this. Notice the punctuation carefully!**

**RULE 6: If you quote dialogue between two or more characters, set the quotation off from your text. Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character’s name indented and written in all capital letters. Follow the name with a colon, and start the quotation. When the dialogue shifts to another character, start a new indented line.**

A short time later, Lear’s daughters try to dismiss all of their father’s servants:

GONERIL: Hear me, my lord.  
What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five  
To follow in a house where twice so many  
Have command to tend you?  
REGAN: What need one?  
LEAR: O, reason not the need! (2.4.254-58)

\*\*\*Adapted from a handout by Sandra Effinger, Norman High School North