

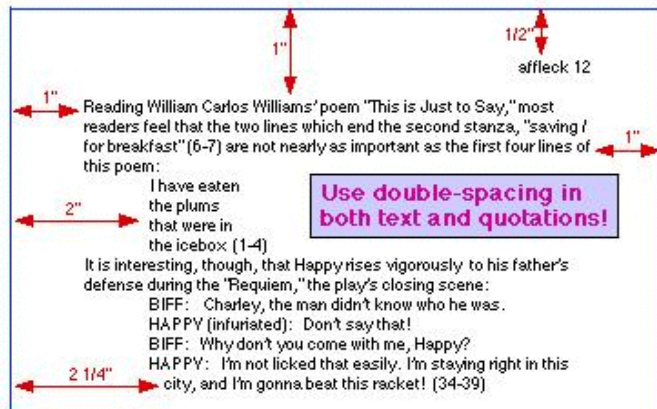
**AP English Notes**  
**November 30, 2004**

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<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/literature.htm>

When quoting from a poem and using fewer than five lines, use slash marks (/) to indicate line breaks and incorporate the lines within the flow of your text. In the lines "My little horse must think it queer / To stop without a farmhouse near," Frost creates a tone that reminds us of nursery rhymes. However, when using more than four lines, indent the lines, use the poet's own line breaks, and do not use quotation marks. (This rule is flexible and its application depends on the length of the lines involved and how important the exact shape of the poem is to your discussion.) When indenting the poem's lines, use the poet's own arrangement of lines as accurately as possible, including indents and the relative size of those indents. If, because of the length of the poet's lines and the width of your paper, you are forced to impose line breaks where the poet had none, be judicious about the point where you impose these breaks. Try to avoid orphan lines (single-word lines), and be consistent about the indent given (about half an inch will do) to the lines you have added.

If you quote dialogue between two or more characters in a play, set the quotation off from the text. Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character's name indented one inch from the left margin and written in all CAPS. Indent all subsequent lines in that character's speech an additional quarter-inch.



Write about literature in the present tense unless logic demands that you do otherwise. (Even though a story is written in the past tense, we say that the main character *writes* to her brother because she *thinks* she *knows* something important. Even though Robert Frost is long gone, we

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say that Frost *suggests* or *uses* or *says*. And in his poems, we say that a phrase or word *suggests* or *means* or *implies* something (all present tense verbs). However, Frost moved his family to England and he *died* in 1963, etc.)

Do not depend on judgmental language (words such as "beautiful," "interesting," "great," "wonderful"). In showing us *how* something works, you imply your enthusiasm; in showing us how something doesn't work or it might have worked better, you've gone far enough.

Biographical information (about the artist whose work is being discussed) can be interesting; however, for most brief papers designed to demonstrate a critical understanding of literature, the author's life remains a relatively minor consideration and remarks about his or her biography can often be omitted altogether. Consult your instructor on this matter if you have questions about it.

When discussing what the speaker or narrator of a poem or story says or does, refer to that person as "the speaker" or "the narrator" or "the voice of the poem (or story)" and don't assume that the narrator or voice of the poem or story represents the author himself or herself.

Do not forget that all essays require an introduction, and do not forget to tell your reader the title of the piece under discussion and who wrote it, even if that information is in the title of your essay.