

IN MLA FORMAT

Habitually italicize the names of plays (or underline them -- it means the same thing). This is especially important with Shakespeare since one usually needs to distinguish the names of the main characters from the names of the plays to avoid occasional confusion: Titus Andronicus [or *Titus Andronicus*?] is concerned with vengeance.

In writing about Shakespeare, as with any literature or film, use present tense to convey the ongoing life of the work: Hamlet stabs Polonius (vs. stabbed); Shakespeare portrays Henry V as a subtle Machiavellian (vs. Shakespeare portrayed).

When quoting four or more lines from Shakespeare, normally you should use block quotation: Richard III tells his troops,

Remember whom you are to cope withal:
A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,
A scum of Britains and base lackey peasants,
Whom their o'eremployed country vomits forth
To desperate adventures and assur'd destruction.
(V.iii.315-319)

In your manuscript, indent block quotations twice -- they are distinct from normal paragraph indentations. Also note the manner of citing the source here. The roman numerals for Act and Scene are standard, although one sees Arabic used by some critics. In quoting shorter passages in linear form, you still need to indicate line breaks when Shakespeare is writing in verse: Othello recalls, "Upon this hint I spake: / She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, / And I lov'd her that she did pity them" (I.iii.166-168). Note the withholding of final punctuation in this case until after the parenthetical citation. The slash marks indicate line breaks in the verse.