

How to Cite Verse

by Dr. Lynne Simpson, Presbyterian College English Department

A quoted line of verse, or part of a line, should appear within quotation marks as part of your text. You may also incorporate no more than two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side (/) to separate lines of verse. Note that all the following examples are correctly double spaced.

Syrie represents a Utopia: "No dearth is ever known there, no disease / wars on the folk, of ills that plague mankind" (15.461-62).

"No dearth is ever known there, no disease / wars on the folk, or ills that plague mankind" (15.261-62), fondly recalls Eumaios.

Note that the citation in parentheses refers first to the book number (in Arabic rather than Roman numerals) followed by the line numbers (461-62 rather than 461-2). You need not include the title of the work itself when the source is obvious and clear to your readers.

Sometimes—though not often in short essays—you will want to quote a larger block of text, which you then should discuss in close, careful detail. Usually this sort of quotation will be introduced by a full colon (:) and then indented ten spaces (or two tabs) from your left-hand margin. You will no longer need slashes to separate lines; instead, the quotation should appear exactly as it does on the printed page.

Homer imagines Syrie as a Utopia where the gods alone—not other human beings—bring death:

No dearth is ever known there, no disease
wars on the folk, of ills that plague mankind;
but when the townsmen reach old age, Apollo
with his longbow of silver comes, and Artemis,
showering arrows of mild death. (15.461-65)

Although death still is described metaphorically in terms of war through the images of the longbow and showering arrows, it only comes "mildly" to the aged.