

Conventions and Documentation for Literary Essays

A Guide for ECC Students Fall 2007

When writing an analysis of a literary work, students must of course be careful with content and organization: ideas must be sound and based on the text of the work, and the organization of the essay must be clear and logical. Too, students must be careful to follow the conventions of academic writing. For students of literature, these conventions include:

1. Proper Punctuation of Titles
2. Correct MLA Essay Format
3. Appropriate Documentation.

Punctuating Titles of Literary Works

Punctuating the titles of works of literature is easy once you understand these basic principles:

1. If a work is generally published or otherwise made available by itself, it is italicized or underlined. (In practice, these are usually longer works.) This means that books, plays, films, operas, long musical works, television series, recordings, epics, magazines, and newspapers are italicized:

Novel: Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*
 Play: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
 Films: Kurosawa's *Rashomon*
 Operas: Puccini's *La Boheme*
 Long Musical Works: Handel's *Messiah*
 Television Series: *The Simpsons*
 Recordings: Ray Charles' last CD, *Genius Loves Company*
 Epics: *Gilgamesh*, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, Dante's *Inferno*
 Magazines: *The Utne Reader*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*
 Newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*

2. If a piece is usually a part of a larger entity and usually not published by itself, it is placed in quotation marks. (In practice, these are shorter works.) This means that poems, short stories, songs, specific episodes of television series, newspaper stories, magazine articles, and book chapters are in quotation marks:

Poem: Yeats' "The Second Coming"
 Short Story: James Joyce's "Araby"
 Song: Harold Arlen's "Over the Rainbow"
 Episode: "The Trouble with Tribbles" on the original *Star Trek*
 Newspaper Story: Michale Downing's "Endless Summer" in the 9 August 2005 edition of *The New York Times*
 Magazine Article: Eric Scigliano's "Inglorious Restorations" in the August 2005 *Harper's Magazine*
 Book Chapter: "The Myth of the City: From the Walls of Jerusalem to the Cafés of Paris" in Phil Cousineau's *Once and Future Myths*

Note the differences in these examples:

Walt Whitman's famous poem "A Noiseless, Patient Spider" appeared in *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of his poetry.

One of the better known *Twilight Zone* episodes is "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street."

The most famous song from the Broadway musical *Rent* is "Seasons of Love."

Judy Garland sings "Over the Rainbow" in the film version of *The Wizard of Oz*.










James Joyce's *Dubliners* includes such famous short stories as "Araby" and "Clay."

Robert Bly's poem "The Night the Cities Burned," appears in a recent issue of the magazine *Poetry*.

Special Note: Because italics and underlining can be difficult in newspaper typesetting and on certain kinds of web pages, you may see these rules broken in newspapers and on the Internet. *The New York Times*, for instance, puts all films and plays in quotation marks rather than italics. Do not be misled by the different styles you may see in non-academic writing. In college writing, the expectation is that titles will be correctly underlined, italicized, or put in quotation marks according to the two rules outlined above.

Manuscript Form

All college work must look professional. Students should therefore follow these conventions when preparing the final draft of an essay:

-  Collegiate work is best produced on a typewriter or a word processor. If an assignment is handwritten, it should be as neat as possible.
-  Always use standard white 8½ by 11 inch paper with clean edges.
-  When it is under your control, always be sure that the ribbon leaves a dark image. If not, replace the ribbon or cartridge.
-  College work is usually double-spaced. There are usually one-inch margins at the top, bottom, right and left.
-  Paragraphs should be indented five spaces from the left margin. Most word processors will do this automatically through the "paragraph" settings. **(In Microsoft Word: "Format">"Paragraph">"Special">"First Line.")**
-  One or two minor corrections on a final draft are generally acceptable. If you must make more than this, print out a clean copy.
-  Most college work must have a title. Long assignments may require a title page. Short essays may simply have the essay's title centered on the first page; there is no need to put your title in quotes or to underline it.
-  Essays should be identified by the writer's name, the instructor's name, the course and section, and the date in the upper left corner of the first page.
-  Current practice is to have your name and the page number in the upper right corner of each page. Most word processors will do this for you very easily, usually as a

"Header" function. (In Microsoft Word: "View">"Header">"Right Align Button">Type last name>"#">"Close.")



Manuscripts are best turned in with the pages clipped together. Elaborate folders are usually obtrusive.

There is a model manuscript on the next page:

Sample Academic Manuscript Form

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Maude Zickefoos

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LIT 201.110

12 Sept. 2006

Epiphanies and the Ending of "Araby"

Many readers are confused by the abrupt ending of James Joyce's "Araby." When the protagonist, a fairly young boy, realizes that he is "a creature driven and derided by vanity" (35), readers often wonder if the boy's "epiphany" is out of step with the minor disappointments he faces at the bazaar. However, earlier parts of the story

Zickefoos 2

Even as early as the first paragraph, Joyce indicates that the boy's environment is at odds with his romantic ideals. We learn that the boy's street is "blind" and that the houses, which are "detached" from each other, face one another with "brown imperturbable faces" (29). Small wonder that the boy is eager to visit Araby

Documentation

Literary essays must generally be fully documented. This means that (1) all works and secondary sources must be listed on a corrected formatted works cited page and (2) all paraphrases and quotations from these works must be identified with parenthetical documentation. A works cited page is an alphabetized list of all the sources used in the essay. There is a model works cited page in this document. Parenthetical documentation means that after each paraphrase or quotation, the source of the information must be identified. Usually it is enough to place the author's name and the appropriate page number in parentheses at the end of each quote or paraphrase. If the author's name is identified elsewhere, there is no need to include it in the parentheses. If a poem is being quoted, line numbers are given rather than page numbers. Here are some examples. Each one is linked to a work on the model works cited page.

Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" opens with a frightening image of disintegration and violence:

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned. (3-6)

Even in modern times, the flight of Icarus fascinates poets who still debate the meaning of his ill-fated flight. One recent poet asks, "Would it/ have been better to flutter ignorantly/ from petal to petal within some garden/ forever?" (Dobyns 11-14).

Quixote's madness clearly sets him apart from the increasingly scientific world of the Renaissance; his vision of truth comes from within rather than from direct observation. When another character refuses to grant that Dulcinea is the most beautiful woman in the world unless he can see her, Quixote replies, "If I were to show her to you, what merit would there be in acknowledging a truth so manifest to all? The important point is that you should believe, confess, affirm, swear, and defend it without setting eyes on her" (Cervantes 78).

Works Cited

Translated Work	Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. <i>Don Quixote</i> . Trans. Walter Starkie. New York: Signet, 1964.
Poem in Anthology	Dobyns, Stephen. "Icarus's Flight." <i>Orpheus and Company: Contemporary Poems on Greek Mythology</i> . Ed. Deborah De Nicola. Hanover, N.H.: UP of New England. 200.
Anonymous Work	<i>Gilgamesh</i> . Trans. Stephen Mitchell. New York: Free Press, 2004.
Short Story	Joyce, James. "Araby." <i>Dubliners</i> . New York: Viking, 1969.
Short Story in Anthology	Joyce, James. "Araby." <i>The Story and Its Writer</i> . Compact 6 th Ed. Ed. Ann Charters. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 398-402.
Novel	Morrison, Toni. <i>Beloved</i> . New York: Plume, 1998.
Film	<i>Rashomon</i> . Dir. Akira Kurosawa. 1950. DVD. Criterion Collection, 2002.
Play	Shakespeare, William. <i>Macbeth</i> . Ed. Kenneth Muir. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2003.
Poem	Yeats, W. B. "The Second Coming." <i>Collected Poems</i> . New York: Macmillan, 1956. 184.