

## POETRY AND PRIMARY SOURCES

For your first essay, you are required to include evidence from your primary sources, be it “The Soldier” or “Lady Lazarus,” *Never Cry Wolf*, or “The Chimney Sweeper.”

**You can expect to quote from each primary source numerous times.**

### Evidence

See the MLA section of [Nature of Writing](#), [King’s Research Guide](#), or [OWL Purdue](#) on our Other Resources page.

In addition to secondary source evidence, your paragraphs require evidence from the primary text. However, not all evidence is relevant. All quotations, like your essay, should be double-spaced.

**For poetry, you use line numbers after the quotation, and after quotations from essays or fiction, you use page numbers. Also remember that you unless the quotation is offset, you must use a slash (/) to indicate the lines in the poem.**

1. Certain facts such as dates and places are a matter of course and do not require evidence.

**NO** Browning is by birth “English” (17).

**NO** Owen is “an English poet” (32).

However, if a description of a scene or setting relates to your topic sentence, it may be included.

**YES** The soldier, who is about to die for his country, describes other countries as “foreign” (2).

Remember, quotations do not speak for themselves. You must make the major points in your own words before supporting them with quotations. Lengthy quotations in particular can be problematic. The longer the quotation, the more you will be expected to discuss its relevance.

There is no set number of quotations for a paragraph. However, often 3 or 4 shorter quotations are more effective than one long quotation. Furthermore, how you use quotations is important. Introduce them in a variety of ways to avoid repetition.

2. Incorporate quotations grammatically into the sentence. Remember, you may change or remove words from the text. Changing words—to fit grammatically, for example—involve square brackets around the changed word. If you remove words from a text, you may use ellipses to indicate the removed text.

Even though the soldier wants the reader to “think only this of [him]” (Brooke 5), this does not necessarily mean that he wants to die even though he will make the earth “richer” (4).

Plath indicates that no matter how much we reduce her to fragments and parts, she is “Nevertheless...the same, identical woman” (34).

**3.** Introduce quotations with a claim or statement, and then provide the quotation for evidence.

In this sonnet, the speaker wants us to not mourn his death: “There shall be / In that rich earth a richer dust concealed” (Brooke 3-4).

**4.** Longer quotations from poems and conversations are often offset. They are easier to read and reveal the form as part of the passage’s meaning. However, any quotations that take up **4** or more lines of **your** essay must be offset. Notice that there are no quotation marks, and the punctuation is before the page number or line number.

The soldier is convinced that his death will be of service to his country:

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there’s some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed; (1-4)

Therefore, the soldier is not afraid of his impending death.

**5.** If you quote the *Bible*, put book, chapter, and verse in brackets after the quotation. You do not need to put it in Works Cited.  
(Gen.3.4-7).

**6.** A Works Cited in MLA Style is a list of all the texts you quoted (cited) in your essay—in this instance your poems and secondary sources. You do not need a bibliography because you will not be using books/articles for information only. The Works Cited goes at the end of your essay, and looks like this example. You may refer to Owl Purdue for further formatting examples for citing sources.

Brooke, Rupert. “The Soldier.” *Poetry Foundation*,  
[www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13076/the-soldier](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13076/the-soldier). Accessed 31 Oct. 2023.