HOW TO REFERENCE SOURCES AND CREATE A WORKS CITED LIST

MLA style requires both in-text citations and a Works Cited list. For every in-text citation there should be a full citation in the Works Cited list and vice versa. You must provide an in-text citation indicating the last name of the author and the page number when you do any of the following:

1. Quote directly from another author

2. Paraphrase or summarize material you used from a source

3. State a fact that is not common knowledge*

*If you are in doubt as to whether something is common knowledge or not, then you should probably document it.

In-Text Citations

In MLA style, parenthetical in-text references are used to document sources used in a paper. Sources are briefly identified within the text of the paper, using the author's surname and the page number of the specific material being used in the paper.

Quotations

All quotations should correspond *exactly* with the original text in wording, spelling, capitalization, and interior punctuation.

Also, be sure to introduce quotations in such a way that they are grammatically correct and make sense with your own prose. In other words, don't just leave a quotation standing as a sentence on its own (see the examples below).

Short Quotations

A short quotation is used when quoting a passage that is four lines or less. The quotation should be surrounded by quotation marks, and the punctuation for the sentence should *follow* the citation.

> *Here is an example:*
>
> Hlongwane explains that "quote quote quote" (850).
>
>   **OR**
>
> "quote quote quote" (Hlongwane 850).
>
> The punctuation goes *after* the citation.

Long Quotations

A long (or block) quotation is used when quoting a passage that is four lines or longer. Set the quotation off from the rest of the text by indenting it ten spaces, and keep it double-spaced (like the rest of your paper). No quotation marks are used. The citation should be placed at the end of the quotation following the final punctuation mark.

> *Here is an example:*
>
> Barr theorizes the reason:
>
> > …the mechanism for the exemption Blake posits in Urizen is not merely textual instability (an instability institutionally
> >
> > minimized but still found, after all, in the Bible itself) but a device to remove the prophetic text and the inspiration it carries
> >
> > from the legal realm that threatened to co-opt and silence it. This mechanism is nothing short of a representation of the
> >
> > prophet and text as insane. (742)
>
> In long quotations, the punctuation goes *before* the citation.

Prose Quotations

Prose quotations (text that is not poetry or in verse) of *not more than four lines* should be placed in quotation marks and incorporated into your text

Note that if you need to modify the quotation in any way, e.g. to include extra words/letters to ensure grammatical correctness, then place those in square brackets.

> *Here is an example:*
>
> In his critical essay, Lawrence suggests that "[t]he suffering which constitutes Lear's grandeur and grants his existence a certain
>
> tragic weight is largely voluntary" (40).
>
> In short quotations, the punctuation goes *after* the citation.

Verse Quotations

A single line of quoted verse appears within quotation marks as part of the text. Two or three lines may also be treated this way, with a slash with a space on each side (/) to highlight the separation of lines:

> *Here is an example:*
>
> "Frost at Midnight" begins with a personification of the frost: "The Frost performs its secret ministry, / Unhelped by any wind…"
>
> (Coleridge 1-2).
>
> The slash mark indicates the start of a new line in the original text.
>
> When citing poetry (and plays that have line numbers), cite the line numbers instead of page numbers. Use arabic numerals (1,2,3) rather than roman numerals (I,II,III) unless your professor specifies otherwise. For plays with Acts and Scenes, include these before the line numbers (i.e., "Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 3 to 4" would look like (1.5.3-4).

A verse quotation of more than three lines should begin on a new line and be indented. In this case, place each line of the verse in the same way as it appears in the original. Do not use quotation marks.

> **Here is an example:**
>
> William Allingham's "Invitation to a Painter, Sent from the West of Ireland" is rich in descriptive detail:
>
> > All by turn, in slow procession, pace the venerable bounds,
> >
> > Barefoot, barehead, seven times duly kneeling in th' accustom'd rounds;
> >
> > Thrice among the hoary ruins, once before the wasted shrine,
> >
> > Once at each great carven cross, and once to form the Mystic Sign,
> >
> > Dipping reverential finger in the Well, on brow and breast. (169-173)

Adding Information to a Quotation

If it is absolutely necessary to include words or letters of your own within the quotation, such material should be enclosed in square brackets, not parentheses.

Information not found in the original source.

> **Here is an example:**
>
> One explanation is that "[b]ecause of her preconceived ideas, [Emma] makes blunders in trying to arrange a match between
>
> Harriet and Mr. Elton" (Amano 24).

Removing Information from a Quotation

If you need to remove words from a direct quotation, you must indicate this by using an ellipsis (three spaced periods) in place of the missing words. For an ellipsis within a sentence, use three periods with a space before each and a space after the last. If you omit words at the end of a sentence, use four periods, with no space before the first. Four periods may also be used to indicate the omission of an entire sentence or paragraph. Keep in mind that the quotation must still embody the original idea; the author you are using must be represented fairly.

> **Here is an example:**
>
> "The critical success of these writers . . . helped to lay the foundation for another astonishing trend of the last 30 years: the rise in
>
> Black commercial fiction, especially that written by women" (Griffin 169).

Paraphrased Material

When you paraphrase (use another author's ideas but rewrite them in your own words), then you still need to cite where you got the information from.

> ***Here is an example:***
>
> Deborah Kennedy argues that this praise shows solidarity between female poets (31).
>
>   ***OR***
>
> However, this praise can also show solidarity between female poets (Kennedy 31).

Citing a Source with One Author

For a source that has one author, cite the author's last name and the page, paragraph, or section number from which you got the information.

> ***Here is an example:***
>
> "quote quote quote" (VanderBurgh 41).
>
>   ***OR***
>
> As VanderBurgh states, "quote quote quote" (41).

Citing a Source with Two or Three Authors

To cite a work by two or three authors, include all the authors' last names separated by commas, and include "and" before the final author.

> ***Here is an example:***
>
> Use "and," not "&."
>
> Paraphrase of material (Asp, Song, and Rockwood 41).
>
>   ***OR***
>
> As Asp, Song, and Rockwood explain, paraphrase of material (107).

Citing a Source with More than Three Authors

For three or more authors, you can either include every name, or you can simply include the first author's name followed by "et al.," which means "and others."

> ***Here is an example:***
>
> "Quote quote quote" (Heckerl et al. 292).
>
>   OR
>
> "Quote quote quote" (Heckerl, Larsen, MacLeod, and Morley 292).

Works Cited

Abrams, M.H. "Drama." *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1999. Print.

Allingham, William, comp. "Invitation to a Painter, Sent from the West of Ireland." *Songs Ballads and Stories.* London:
George Bell, 1877. 121-130. Print.

Amano, Miyuki. "A Cross-Cultural Approach to Jane Austen's Novels." *Hecate* 34.2 (2008): 17-31. *Academic Search
Premier*. Web. 2 Sept. 2009.

Barr, Mark L. "Prophecy, the Law of Insanity, and *The [First] Book of Urizen*." *Studies in English Literature* 46.4 (2006):
739-762. *Project Muse*. Web. 29 Apr. 2009.

Cohen, Derek. *Searching Shakespeare: Studies in Culture and Authority*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2003. Web.
3 May 2009.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Frost at Midnight.* The Samuel Taylor Coleridge Archive, U of Virginia Library, 5 Oct 1999.
Web. 2 Sept. 2009.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "Thirty Years of Black American Literature and Literary Studies: A Review." *Journal of Black
Studies* 35 (2004): 165-174. Print.

Kennedy, Deborah. *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution*. London: Associated UP, 2002. Print.

Lawrence, Sean. "The Difficulty of Dying in King Lear." *English Studies in Canada* 31.4 (2005): 35-52. *Project Muse*.
Web. 2 Sept. 2009.

Malton, Sara. *Forgery in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture: Fictions of Finance from Dickens to Wilde*. New
York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

"Postmodernism." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2009. Web. 17 Jan. 2010.

Saint Mary's University. *Academic Calendar.* Halifax: Saint Mary's U, 2009. Print.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854. Print.

Watson, Ariel. "Cries of Fire: Psychotherapy in Contemporary British and Irish Drama." *Modern Drama* 51.2 (2008):
188-210. Web. 17 Jan. 2010.
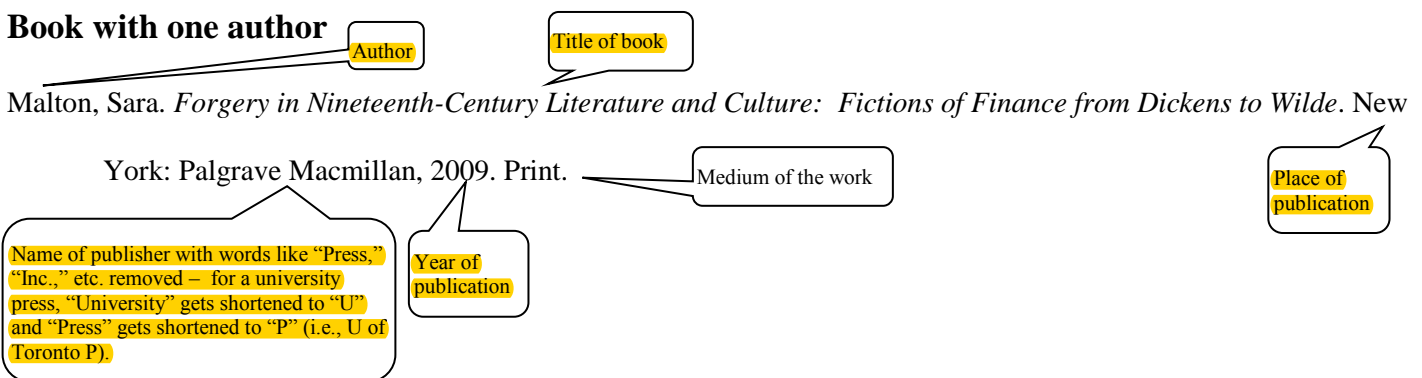
The Works Cited List

A Works Cited list is a detailed list of all the sources (journal articles, books, primary sources, documents from websites, interviews, etc.) used in preparing a paper. It appears at the end of an essay on a new page. Here are some things to note about the Works Cited list:

- **Alphabetically Organize the List:** Entries should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names. If you have a source without an author, arrange it alphabetically by title within the same list. In this case, ignore any initial *A, An,* or *The.*

- **Authors:** If the work has only one author, the entry should include the author's last name, followed by the first name and separated with a comma (e.g. Watson, Ariel). If there is more than one author, the second author's name will appear in the regular form. Use the word "and" when listing multiple authors of a single work (e.g. MacLeod, Alexander, and Jennifer VanderBurgh).

- **Hanging Indent:** The first line of the entry is flush with the left margin, and all subsequent lines are indented (5 to 7 spaces) to form a "hanging indent."

- **Double-spaced:** Similar to the body of the paper, the Works Cited list should be double-spaced, both between and within entries.

- **Web Publications:** The date of retrieval must be recorded, as Web sources are subject to frequent updates and alterations. Inclusion of URLs is not necessary unless otherwise specified by your professor. If you are required to cite the URL, place the complete address within angle brackets, at the end of the entry and followed by a period.

- **Cross-Referencing an Anthology**: When listing multiple works contained within one anthology, it is not necessary to include the full publication details for each entry. Include a complete entry for the anthology, then add separate cross-reference entries for each individual piece. Cross-reference entries include the author's name and the title of the piece in quotation marks, followed by the anthology editor's name and the page numbers of the piece.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED ENTRIES

Books

Book with one author

Author

Title of book

Malton, Sara. *Forgery in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture: Fictions of Finance from Dickens to Wilde*. New

York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Medium of the work

Place of publication

Name of publisher with words like "Press," "Inc.," etc. removed – for a university press, "University" gets shortened to "U" and "Press" gets shortened to "P" (i.e., U of Toronto P).

Year of publication

Book with an editor

Lopate, Phillip, ed. *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present*. New York:

Anchor, 1994. Print.

Book with two or three authors or editors

> "Editors" is abbreviated as "eds." Omit if the book has authors rather than editors.

Kennedy, Seán, and Katherine Weiss, eds. *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan,

2009. Print.

Book with more than three authors or editors

Nardizzi, Vin, et al., eds. *Queer Renaissance Historiography: Backward Gaze.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009.

> For three or more authors or editors, either include all the names or simply include the first name followed by "et al."

> Name of publisher with words like "Press," "Inc.," etc. removed – for a university press, "University" gets shortened to "U" and "Press" gets shortened to "P" (i.e., U of Toronto P)

Book with no author or editor

American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style. Boston: Houghton, 2005. Print.

Entry in an anthology (no author)

> Use "Trans." (for Translator) if there is one.

> Title of the anthology

The Battle of Maldon. Trans. E.T. Donaldson. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Eds. M. H. Abrams et al. 6th ed.

Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 1993. 71-75. Print.

> Editors (for singular: Ed., for plural, Eds.)

> Edition, then volume number (if applicable)

> Inclusive page numbers of the story, poem, etc. that you are citing

Entry in an anthology (with an author)

Lewis, Lauren. "Learning to Lie." *The Wisdom of Old Souls*. Ed. Bonita Summers. Brighton: Hidden, 2008. 89-95. Print.

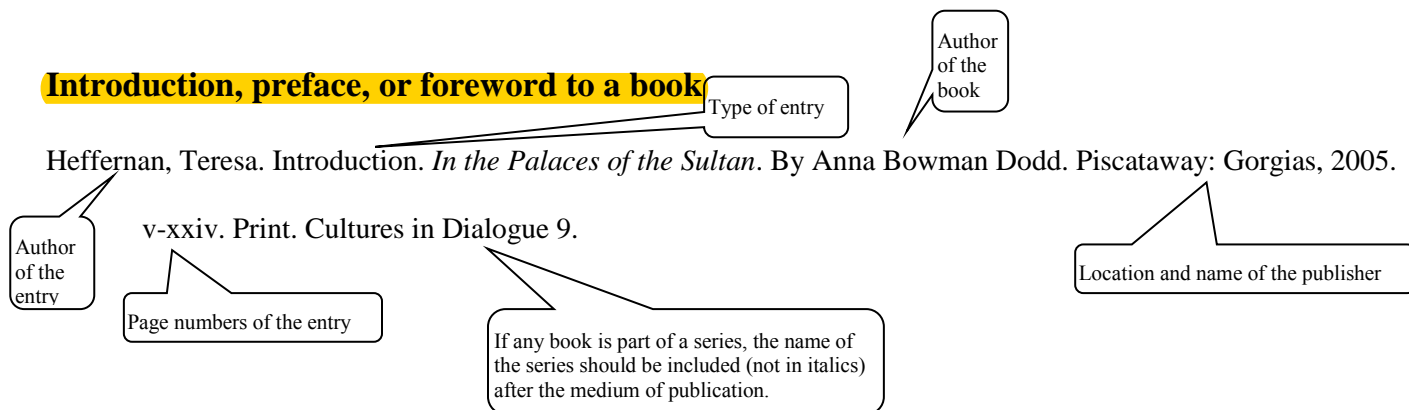Lewis, Lauren. "Learning to Lie." Summers 89-95.   *(If cross-reference entry.)*

Entire anthology

> List all the editors if there are up to three, but if there are more than three, then only the first editor needs to be included and followed by "et al."

Abrams, M. H., et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Major Authors*. 6th ed. New York: Norton,
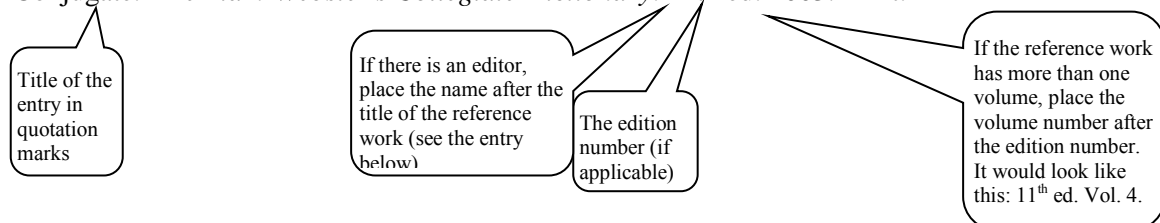
1996. Print.

> Edition, then volume number (if applicable)

Introduction, preface, or foreword to a book

Heffernan, Teresa. Introduction. *In the Palaces of the Sultan*. By Anna Bowman Dodd. Piscataway: Gorgias, 2005.

v-xxiv. Print. Cultures in Dialogue 9.

Type of entry

Author of the book

Author of the entry

Page numbers of the entry

If any book is part of a series, the name of the series should be included (not in italics) after the medium of publication.

Location and name of the publisher

Entry in a reference source (dictionary, encyclopedia, etc.)

"Conjugate." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 11th ed. 2003. Print.

Title of the entry in quotation marks

If there is an editor, place the name after the title of the reference work (see the entry below)

The edition number (if applicable)

If the reference work has more than one volume, place the volume number after the edition number. It would look like this: 11th ed. Vol. 4.

Entry in a reference source (dictionary, encyclopedia, etc.) with an author

Hulan, Renée. "Assiniwi, Bernard." *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*. Ed. William H. New. Toronto: U of Toronto

P, 2002. Print.

Title of the entry in quotation marks

Always shorten "University" to "U" and "Press" to "P" and remove extra words like "Inc.," "Associated," etc.

The Bible

"Gen. ed." means "General editor" – "ed." is used unless the editor is specified as a general editor.

The New Jerusalem Bible. Gen. ed. Henry Wansbrough. New York: Doubleday, 1985. Print.

Translation

Homer. *The Odyssey of Homer*. Trans. Richmond Lattimore. New York: Harper, 1991. Print.

Name of the translator

Plays

Original play

Cloutier, Stephen. *The Modern World*. Halifax: DaPoPo Theatre, 2005. Print.

Play in an anthology

> If the play was originally published independently (as most plays are), then italicize the title. If it is original to the anthology, then the title should be included in quotation marks and not italicized.

> Title of the anthology

Eno, Will. *Tragedy: A Tragedy. New Downtown Now: An Anthology of New Theater from Downtown New York*. Eds. Mac

Wellman and Young Jean Lee. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. 49-71. Print.

> Always shorten "University" to "U" and "Press" to "P" and remove extra words like "Inc.." "Associated." etc.

> Page numbers of the play in the anthology

> Editors of the anthology

Classical Play (Shakespeare, Ancient Greek play, etc.)

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet.* Eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1992. Print.

Journal Articles

Article in a scholarly journal **(print source)**

Beckford, Sharon Morgan. "'A Geography of the Mind': Black Canadian Women Writers as Cartographers of the

Canadian Geographic Imagination." *Journal of Black Studies* 38.3 (2008): 461-483. Print.

> Volume number, issue number

> Page numbers of the article

Article from an electronic database

Perkin, J. Russell. "Northrop Frye and Matthew Arnold." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 74.3 (2005): 793-815. *Project*

Muse. Web. 7 Dec. 2009.

> Indicate the medium of publication. The URL is not necessary.

> Date the article was   .

> Volume number, issue number

> Page numbers of the article

> Name of electronic database

Websites and Internet Sources

Document on a website

Bartlett, Brian. "The Sideways 8." *The Parliamentary Poet Laureate*. Library of Parliament, Mar. 2009. Web. 20 Jan.

2010.

Document title - if there is no title, then identify the type of page (i.e. "Homepage", "Online posting", "Introduction", etc.)

Author of the document

Title of the overall website

Publisher or sponsor of the site. If one is not listed, then write N.p.

Publication date (include day, month, and year if available). If nothing is available, use n.d.

Retrieval date

Website

Landow, George P., ed. *The Victorian Web*. N.p. Nov. 2003. Web. 5 May 2009.

Publisher or sponsor of the site. If one is not listed, then write N.p.

If the website is being cited as a whole, then list the title first. If particular information from the website is being cited, then list the editor first (as you would normally list an author or editor).

Publication date (include day, month, *and* year if available). If nothing is available, use n.d.

Date retrieved

Electronic or digital book

Davies, Máire Messenger. '*Dear BBC': Children, Television Storytelling and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge

UP, 2001. *Cambridge Catalogue*. Web. 1 May 2009.

Include the name of the database or website where the book was retrieved.

Other Types of Sources

Entry in a course pack

Title of the entry

Title of the coursepack

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour." *Introduction to Literature Course Pack*. Ed. Janet Hill. Halifax: Saint Mary's U,

2008. 36-37. Print.

Editor's name (will usually be the professor of the course)

Always shorten "University" to "U" when listing a publisher.

Lecture

Title of lecture

Name/title of the course or conference, if applicable

Wilson, David. "Twelfth Night." English 1205. Saint Mary's University, Halifax. 23 Nov. 2008. Lecture.

Name of lecturer

Sponsoring organization, if applicable

Location of the lecture (city)

Date of lecture

Article in a newsletter

Kennedy, Deborah. "Teaching Religious Texts in the University Classroom." *Teaching & Learning* 18.1 (2007): 8. Print.

> If no volume or issue is provided, include the month or season and year of the newsletter immediately after the title (i.e., *Teaching & Learning* Fall 2007).

> Volume and issue number (if applicable)

> Page number(s) of the article

Thesis or dissertation

Oyinsan, Olubunmi. "Healing Tongues: An Exploration of the Impact of Orature on Literary Texts by Black Women."

Diss. Saint Mary's University, 2006. Print.

> Write "Thesis" if it is a Master's or Undergraduate thesis and "Diss." if it is a PhD dissertation.

Published interview

> Title of the interview. If it is untitled, label it "Interview" (without quotation marks).

Bartlett, Brian. "An Interview with Brian Bartlett." Interview by Carise Foster. *Contemporary Verse 2* 25.3 (2003): 24-31.

Print.

> Person being interviewed

> Interviewer's name (if known and pertinent)

> Title of the work in which the interview is published (cite it according to the type of source it is – i.e. journal, magazine, etc.)

Unpublished interview

MacLeod, Alexander. Personal interview. 10 Jan. 2010.

> Person being interviewed

> Type of interview (i.e., Personal or Telephone)

> Date the interview was conducted

Personal communications (letters, emails, memos, etc.)

Hardiman, Gwen. "Re: In-text citations." Message to Jane Doe. 27 Mar. 2009. E-mail.

> Author of the communication

> Title or subject line of the message (if applicable)

> Description of the message including the recipient

> Date of the message

> Medium of delivery

Book review

Takševa, Tatjana. Rev. of *Women and Children First: Feminism, Rhetoric, and Public Policy*, eds. Sharon M. Meagher

and Patrice DiQuinzio. *Journal of the Association for Research in Mothering*

8.1 (2006): 361-362. Print.

> "Review" is abbreviated to "Rev."

> Editors or authors of the book being reviewed (if the book has authors instead of editors, do not include "eds."

> Name of reviewer

> Name of journal in which the review is written

> Journal citation information (volume number, issue number, and year of publication)

Magazine article

Curtis, Wayne. "All the Street's a Stage." *The Atlantic*. Mar. 2009: 14-16. Print.

> Do not include volume and issue numbers for magazines.

> Include the complete date (day, month, year) if available

> Give inclusive page numbers – if the article is on non-consecutive pages, just include the first page number and a plus sign (i.e. 4+).

Newspaper article

McTernan, John. "Robbie Burns at 250." *Globe and Mail* 24 Jan. 2009:

F8+. Print.

> Give the complete date.

> Give inclusive page numbers – if the article is on non-consecutive pages, just include the first page number and a plus sign.

> Do not include articles (A, An, The) in newspaper titles. If the paper is not a national one, and if the name does not include the city, then include the city in square brackets after the name - i.e. *Chronicle Herald* [Halifax]

Film or video recording

Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Joe Wright. Perf. Keira Knightly, Matthew MacFadyen, and Brenda Blethyn.

Universal Studios, 2005. Film.

> Include names/people that seem relevant (i.e. the names of performers, directors, screenwriters, and producers). In this example, the director and the leading performers have been highlighted

> "Performers" is abbreviated to "Perf."

> Publication medium

> Name of the distributor

> Year the film was released

Government publication

> If no author is listed, cite the government department issuing the document.

> Title of the report

Canadian Film and Television Production Association. *An Economic Report on the Canadian Film and Television*

Production Industry – Profile 2009. Ottawa: CFTPA, 2009. Web. 10 Jan. 2010

> Publication location

> Publisher (will often be the same government agency that is listed as the author if there is no author)

> Publication date – if one is not available, use "n.d."

Brochure, pamphlet, or press release

> Title of the brochure or pamphlet

Saint George's Friends of Clemente Society. *Halifax Humanities 101 Presents: Odyssey Live!* Halifax: Saint George's,

n.d. Print.

> If no person or organization as the author is listed, then begin the entry with the title of the brochure or pamphlet.

> Date of publication. If one is not provided, use n.d.

> Publication location and publisher's name. If the publisher 's name is the same as the author (this is common), use a shortened version if the organization here if the name is long.

Student's last name followed by the page number as a running header

Nelson MacDonald

Student's name

Professor English

Professor's name

ENGL 1000.1A

Course number and name

20 July 2009

Date of submission

Full title of the paper

A True Expression of Trauma:
An Examination of Absurdity and History in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*

Changes to the original text must be written in square brackets.

Indent paragraph

    In the essay "Close-Ups," Adam Phillips declares that any "coherent account a person can give of their history is, by definition, a defensive account," because a "modern person distances themselves from their history through narrative coherence and plausibility" (149). It is this exact idea that "[a] good story is bad history" which Samuel Beckett responds to in *Endgame*. As Phillips explains, it is impossible to write a "coherent, intelligible narrative about events that rendered people vague, incoherent, numbed and hurried" (148). How can one write a true history of events like the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima, the American slave trade, or the Irish famine without communicating the very absurdity of them? Beckett is a playwright who was motivated by some form of this question; accordingly, his works express "the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach" (*Theatre of the Absurd* 17).

The punctuation is placed after the parentheses in short quotations.

In *Endgame,* Beckett does not allude to historical events; rather, he evokes the incoherence and absurdity of having experienced them purely through the formal elements of the play. These formal elements include the use of repetition, the failure of language to convey meaning, and the use of questions.

    Beckett begins *Endgame* with a repetitive speech that immediately communicates the notion of absurdity to the reader:

CLOV (*fixed gaze, tonelessly*):

Introduce quotations and integrate them into your own writing – do not leave them sitting as independent sentences.

Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished.

(Pause)

Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's

A heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (1)

Cite long quotations with the author (if he/she is not included in the sentence before the quotation) and page number in brackets following the punctuation.

When two works by the same author are used in a paper, a shortened version of the title should be included between the author's name (which is within the text in this example) and the page number.

In these lines, the word that starts each sentence also appears in the middle and the end. Clov's multiple repetitions make his speech seem almost circular in nature and, therefore, unintelligible to the reader.… **[section continues]**

Beckett continues to evoke incoherence by revealing how language continually fails witnesses of catastrophic events. For example, Hamm struggles to find the words to discuss the post-apocalyptic world that he inhabits:

> HAMM: Do you not think *this* has gone on long enough?
>
> CLOV: Yes!
>
> *(Pause.)*
>
> *What?*
>
> HAMM: This…this…*thing.* (45, emphasis added)

Quotation from a play that is longer than three lines

Explanation of changes made to a quotation (using italics to add emphasis is generally the only acceptable change to make without using square brackets).

Hamm's inability to identify the world he lives in as anything more than "this" or "thing" is indicative of the problem of translating the true spirit of traumatic events into words… **[section continues]**

Phillips concludes "Close-Ups" by leaving the reader with the question of "how to historicize too-closeness" (149). In *Endgame*, Beckett seems to propose that the key to telling the truth about the traumatic events we experience is to communicate the absolute absurdity of them.

He evokes the true feelings of events like the Holocaust and the Irish Famine not by attempting to situate them in a coherent and plausible narrative, but by writing a babbling, vague, disconnected, and repetitive play about people who experienced some unknown tragedy and are left unable to explain it or even name it. Ultimately, one is left to wonder whether or not *Endgame,* and not Steven Speilberg's *Schindler's List* or Roméo Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil,* should be revered as the most authentic account of every atrocity in human history.

Works Cited

Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame*. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Esslin, Martin. *Absurd Drama*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1969.

---. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966.

Phillips, Adam. "Close-ups." *History Workshop Journal* 57.1 (2004): 142-149.

When using two works by the same author, list every entry after the first by using three dashes.

- **Alphabetically organize the list:** Entries should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names. If you have multiple sources by one author, arrange them alphabetically by title within the same list. In this case, ignore any initial *A, An,* or *The.*

- **Hanging Indent:** The first line of the entry is flush with the left margin, and all subsequent lines are indented (5 to 7 spaces) to form a "hanging indent."

- **Double-spaced:** Similar to the body of the paper, the Works Cited list should be double-spaced, both between and within entries.

- **Web Publications:** The date of retrieval must be recorded, as Web sources are subject to frequent updates and alterations. Inclusion of URLs is not necessary unless otherwise specified by your professor. If you are required to cite the URL, place the complete address within angle brackets.

Nelson MacDonald

Professor English

ENGL 1000.1A

20 July 2009

A True Expression of Trauma:

An Examination of Absurdity and History in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*

In the essay "Close-Ups," Adam Phillips declares that any "coherent account a person can give of their history is, by definition, a defensive account," because a "modern person distances themselves from their history through narrative coherence and plausibility" (149). It is this exact idea that "[a] good story is bad history" which Samuel Beckett responds to in *Endgame*. As Phillips explains, it is impossible to write a "coherent, intelligible narrative about events that rendered people vague, incoherent, numbed and hurried" (148). How can one write a true history of events like the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima, the American slave trade, or the Irish famine without communicating the very absurdity of them? Beckett is a playwright who was motivated by some form of this question; accordingly, his works express "the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach" (*Theatre of the Absurd* 17).

In *Endgame,* Beckett does not allude to historical events; rather, he evokes the incoherence and absurdity of having experienced them purely through the formal elements of the play. These formal elements include the use of repetition, the failure of language to convey meaning, and the use of questions.

Beckett begins *Endgame* with a repetitive speech that immediately communicates the notion of absurdity to the reader:

CLOV (*fixed gaze, tonelessly*):

Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished.

(Pause)

Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's

A heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (1)

In these lines, the word that starts each sentence also appears in the middle and the end. Clov's multiple repetitions make his speech seem almost circular in nature and, therefore, unintelligible to the reader.… **[section continues]**

Beckett continues to evoke incoherence by revealing how language continually fails witnesses of catastrophic events. For example, Hamm struggles to find the words to discuss the post-apocalyptic world that he inhabits:

> HAMM: Do you not think *this* has gone on long enough?
>
> CLOV: Yes!
>
> *(Pause.)*
>
> *What?*
>
> HAMM: This…this…*thing.* (45, emphasis added)

Quotation from a play that is longer than three lines

Explanation of changes made to a quotation (using italics to add emphasis is generally the only acceptable change to make without using square brackets).

Hamm's inability to identify the world he lives in as anything more than "this" or "thing" is indicative of the problem of translating the true spirit of traumatic events into words… **[section continues]**

Phillips concludes "Close-Ups" by leaving the reader with the question of "how to historicize too-closeness" (149). In *Endgame*, Beckett seems to propose that the key to telling the truth about the traumatic events we experience is to communicate the absolute absurdity of them.

He evokes the true feelings of events like the Holocaust and the Irish Famine not by attempting to situate them in a coherent and plausible narrative, but by writing a babbling, vague, disconnected, and repetitive play about people who experienced some unknown tragedy and are left unable to explain it or even name it. Ultimately, one is left to wonder whether or not *Endgame,* and not Steven Speilberg's *Schindler's List* or Roméo Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil,* should be revered as the most authentic account of every atrocity in human history.

Works Cited

Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame*. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Esslin, Martin. *Absurd Drama*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1969.

---. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966.

Phillips, Adam. "Close-ups." *History Workshop Journal* 57.1 (2004): 142-149.

When using two works by the same author, list every entry after the first by using three dashes.

- **Alphabetically organize the list:** Entries should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names. If you have multiple sources by one author, arrange them alphabetically by title within the same list. In this case, ignore any initial *A, An,* or *The.*

- **Hanging Indent:** The first line of the entry is flush with the left margin, and all subsequent lines are indented (5 to 7 spaces) to form a "hanging indent."

- **Double-spaced:** Similar to the body of the paper, the Works Cited list should be double-spaced, both between and within entries.

- **Web Publications:** The date of retrieval must be recorded, as Web sources are subject to frequent updates and alterations. Inclusion of URLs is not necessary unless otherwise specified by your professor. If you are required to cite the URL, place the complete address within angle brackets.

FURTHER GUIDES TO MLA STYLE AND WRITING ASSISTANCE

Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 7*th ed. New York:

MLA, 2009. Print.

Purdue OWL. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL*. Purdue U Writing Lab, 11 Jan. 2010.

Web. 20 Jan. 2010.

The Writing Centre, in Room 115 of the Burke Building on Saint Mary's campus, has many writing guides and style manuals to help students. In addition, we offer tutoring services for help with English essays and all other types of writing assignments. Online Writing guides are also available. To book an appointment or for more information, please contact us:

The Writing Centre
Burke 115
Tel: (902) 491-6202
writing@smu.ca
http://www.smu.ca/academic/writingcentre/