

chicago style parenthetical citation for play

Title: Mastering the Chicago Style Parenthetical Citation for Plays

chicago style parenthetical citation for play conventions are crucial for academic integrity and clear communication when referencing dramatic works. This comprehensive guide will demystify the process, ensuring you can accurately cite dialogue, stage directions, and overall plot elements from any theatrical production according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS). We will delve into the fundamental principles of author-date and notes-bibliography systems, focusing specifically on the nuances of parenthetical citations within the context of plays. You'll learn how to attribute direct quotes, paraphrase ideas, and incorporate performance details seamlessly into your academic writing. Understanding these guidelines is essential for students, researchers, and anyone needing to present a scholarly analysis of theatrical works.

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Understanding the Basics of Chicago Style Citations

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers two primary citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. For parenthetical citations, we are primarily concerned with the author-date system, although understanding the relationship between both is beneficial. The author-date system uses brief in-text citations to direct readers to a full bibliographic entry at the end of the paper. This method is common in the social sciences and natural sciences, and its application to plays requires specific attention to how dramatic works are structured.

The fundamental principle behind any parenthetical citation is to provide just enough information within the text to allow the reader to locate the source of the information without disrupting the flow of your writing. For plays, this means identifying the playwright and the specific location within the text where the cited material can be found. The goal is always clarity

and attribution, ensuring that you give credit where it is due and that your readers can easily verify your sources.

Core Components of a Chicago Style Parenthetical Citation for Plays

A Chicago style parenthetical citation for a play typically includes the playwright's last name and a locator. The locator is the most variable part and depends on how the play is published and what you are citing. For most published plays, this locator will be the act and scene number, followed by the line number(s).

The basic structure for a parenthetical citation of dialogue from a play follows this pattern: (Playwright's Last Name Act.Scene.Line).

The Playwright's Last Name

The playwright's last name is the first element in your parenthetical citation. It directly attributes the dialogue or information to the author of the play. For instance, if you are quoting Shakespeare, you would use "Shakespeare." This is straightforward and serves as the primary identifier of the source work within your text.

The Locator: Act, Scene, and Line Numbers

The locator is critical for pinpointing the exact location of the cited material. Most published plays are divided into acts and scenes. The standard convention is to use Roman numerals for acts and scenes. For example, Act I, Scene 2 would be represented as I.2. If the play is not divided into scenes, you might use only act numbers or page numbers, depending on the edition.

Line numbers are the most precise form of locator for dialogue. These are usually provided in the margins of scholarly editions of plays. When citing a range of lines, use a hyphen. For example, (Shakespeare III.1.45-50) indicates a citation from William Shakespeare's play, Act III, Scene 1, lines 45 through 50.

Citing Dialogue in Plays

When you directly quote dialogue from a play, you must include a

parenthetical citation. This citation allows your reader to find the exact line(s) you are referencing in the original text. The most common and precise method involves act, scene, and line numbers, as these are standardized within scholarly editions.

For a single line of dialogue, the citation would be (Playwright's Last Name Act.Scene.Line). For example, if quoting a line from Hamlet, you might write: "To be, or not to be: that is the question" (Shakespeare III.1.56).

If you are quoting a passage that spans multiple lines of dialogue, you would cite the first and last line numbers, separated by a hyphen. For instance, if you quote lines 78 through 82 of Act II, Scene 3 from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, the citation would appear as: "This is a terrible thing, Willy. It is, and you know it" (Miller II.3.78-82).

Incorporating Block Quotes

For longer quotations (typically four or more lines of prose, or more than ten lines of verse), Chicago style dictates using a block quote. This means indenting the entire quote from the left margin. The parenthetical citation for a block quote is placed after the final punctuation of the quoted material, just as it would be for shorter quotes.

For example:

Hester Prynne reflects on her public humiliation:

In this way, the sphere of her affections was contracted; and she was left to drink from the bitter cup of ignominy, with only the softening influence of a virtuous will to mitigate her lot. (Hawthorne IV.1.16)

Paraphrasing Dialogue and Ideas

Even when paraphrasing dialogue or summarizing the content of a play, it is good practice to include a parenthetical citation, especially if the specific idea or plot point is not widely known or could be attributed to a particular moment. The format remains the same: (Playwright's Last Name Act.Scene.Line).

For example, if you are discussing Hamlet's contemplation of suicide, you could write: "Hamlet famously ponders the existential dilemma of life versus death" (Shakespeare III.1.56-60).

Citing Stage Directions in Plays

Stage directions, those italicized instructions within a play script that describe actions, settings, and character movements, also require citation if you are referencing them directly. These are crucial for understanding the playwright's intent regarding presentation and performance.

When citing stage directions, you will still use the playwright's last name. However, the locator might differ. If the stage direction is immediately before or after a block of dialogue, you can often cite the line number of that dialogue. If the stage direction is more descriptive and not tied to specific dialogue, you may need to refer to page numbers or a more general location within the act and scene.

For instance, if a stage direction describes a character's hesitant entrance:

The character enters hesitantly, looking over his shoulder (Miller I.1.p.15). This emphasizes his fear.

Here, "p.15" refers to the page number in the specific edition you are using. Always check your edition for the most precise locator.

Citing the Play as a Whole (Indirectly)

There might be instances where you are referring to the play's overall themes, plot, or character development without quoting specific lines or referencing particular stage directions. In such cases, a parenthetical citation that simply includes the playwright's last name and the publication year is sufficient. This is particularly useful when making general claims about the play.

For example, if you are discussing the social commentary in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, you might write: "Tennessee Williams masterfully critiques the decaying Southern aristocracy" (Williams, 1947).

This method is less common for parenthetical citations within the author-date system for plays compared to citing specific dialogue, but it serves its purpose for broader arguments. Remember to ensure your full citation in the bibliography includes the publication year.

Special Considerations for Play Citations

When citing plays, several specific scenarios require careful attention to ensure accuracy and adherence to Chicago style guidelines. These include dealing with different editions, plays without act/scene divisions, and citing the performance itself.

Different Editions of Plays

It is imperative to cite the edition of the play you are actually using. Different editions can have varying line numbering, act/scene divisions, or even textual variations. Your parenthetical citation must correspond to the locator information found in your specific edition. In your bibliography, you must clearly list the edition you consulted, including the editor, publisher, and year of publication.

Plays Without Act/Scene Divisions

Some modern or experimental plays may not follow the traditional act and scene structure. In such cases, you will typically rely on page numbers for your citations. The parenthetical citation would then be (Playwright's Last Name, page number). For example: (O'Neill, p. 78).

Always consult the preface or introductory material of your edition. Playwrights or editors often provide guidance on how to cite their work, especially if it deviates from standard conventions.

Citing Performances

If you are citing a specific theatrical performance rather than the published text of a play, the citation method changes significantly. You would typically cite the performance in your notes and bibliography, and parenthetical citations within the text might refer to the performance date or director, depending on what is most relevant to your argument. However, for most academic papers focusing on the text, citing the published play is the standard approach.

Parenthetical Citation Examples for Plays

To solidify your understanding, here are several examples illustrating various scenarios when using Chicago style parenthetical citations for plays:

- **Quoting a single line of dialogue:** "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players" (Shakespeare II.7.139).
- **Quoting a range of lines:** Macbeth's soliloquy reveals his inner turmoil and ambition (Shakespeare I.7.1-28).
- **Paraphrasing a passage:** The idea that one should "strike, while the iron is hot" is central to many dramatic plots (Marlowe, Tamburlaine, Part 1 III.2.1).
- **Citing a stage direction:** The character enters with a forced smile, hiding her true despair (Williams, p. 35).
- **Referencing the play's general theme:** Ibsen's play critiques the restrictive social norms for women in the 19th century (Ibsen, 1879).
- **Using page numbers for a play without scenes:** The existential dread is palpable in Beckett's depiction of waiting (Beckett, p. 12).

When to Use Parenthetical Citations vs. Notes

The choice between parenthetical citations and endnotes/footnotes depends on the citation system you are using and your instructor's requirements. If you are employing the author-date system, parenthetical citations are the standard for in-text references. They provide immediate, brief attribution.

However, if you are using the notes-bibliography system, you would use footnotes or endnotes for citations. These notes can contain more extensive commentary or explanation than parenthetical citations allow. The first time a source is cited in the notes-bibliography system, the note typically includes full publication details, while subsequent citations are shortened. For plays in this system, the note would include playwright, title, act, scene, and line numbers, or page numbers if applicable.

It is crucial to confirm which citation system your instructor or publication requires. Both systems serve the purpose of accurate source attribution, but their implementation in the text differs.

The Importance of a Comprehensive Bibliography

Regardless of whether you use parenthetical citations or notes, a complete and correctly formatted bibliography or works cited list is essential. This list provides full publication details for every source you have cited in your paper, allowing readers to locate and consult those sources themselves.

For plays, this entry would include the playwright, the title of the play, the editor (if any), the publisher, and the year of publication.

Proper citation practices, including the accurate use of Chicago style parenthetical citations for plays, demonstrate scholarly rigor and respect for intellectual property. Mastering these details ensures your research is credible and your arguments are well-supported.

FAQ

Q: What is the basic format for a Chicago style parenthetical citation for dialogue in a play?

A: The basic format for a Chicago style parenthetical citation for dialogue in a play, using the author-date system, is (Playwright's Last Name Act.Scene.Line). For example, (Shakespeare III.1.56).

Q: How do I cite a play that does not have act and scene divisions?

A: If a play does not have act and scene divisions, you will typically use page numbers for your citations. The format would be (Playwright's Last Name, page number), such as (O'Neill, p. 78).

Q: Should I cite stage directions in my Chicago style parenthetical citation for a play?

A: Yes, if you are directly referencing or discussing a stage direction, you should cite it. The locator might be the line number of the surrounding dialogue or a page number, depending on the edition and the context. For example, (Miller I.1.p.15).

Q: What if I am quoting a passage that spans multiple lines of dialogue from a play?

A: When quoting a range of lines, you cite the first and last line numbers, separated by a hyphen. For instance, (Miller II.3.78-82).

Q: Do I need to include the year in a parenthetical

citation for a play when using Chicago style?

A: Generally, for the author-date system when citing specific lines of dialogue, the year is not included in the parenthetical citation itself but is crucial for the full bibliographic entry. If you are making a general reference to the play's themes or plot without specific dialogue, then (Playwright's Last Name, Year) is appropriate, such as (Williams, 1947).

Q: How do I cite a play in a collection or anthology using Chicago style parenthetical citation?

A: When citing a play from a collection, your parenthetical citation will still primarily focus on the playwright and the play's internal divisions (act, scene, line or page). Your bibliography entry will be more complex, noting the collection's editor, title, and publication details. The parenthetical citation remains focused on the play itself: (Playwright's Last Name Act.Scene.Line).

Q: What is the difference between parenthetical citations and notes in Chicago style when citing plays?

A: Parenthetical citations are used with the author-date system and are brief in-text references. Notes (footnotes or endnotes) are used with the notes-bibliography system and can include more detailed information and commentary.

Q: If I am quoting a block of text from a play, where does the parenthetical citation go?

A: For block quotes in Chicago style, the parenthetical citation is placed after the final punctuation of the quoted material, just as it would be for shorter quotes.

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