Poetry in MLA Format: Parenthetical Citations and More

The Main Rules:

- Just as you do in parenthetical citations for other types of sources, you must **include the author** if the author is not already named in the signal phrase.
- When you cite a poem, **put the line number in parentheses**.
- **The first time you cite a poem**, include the word “line” along with the line number of the words you’re referencing. After the first time, you only need to include the line number.

Example Paragraph:

The poem “Requiem” benefits from its many examples of alliteration. In the first stanza, the author writes “Under the wide and starry sky / Dig the grave and let me lie:” (Stephenson lines 1-2). Although “starry sky” and “let me lie” repeat different sounds and are therefore separate instances of alliteration, the effect is the same: the alliteration makes the poem read more smoothly. In the second stanza, Stephenson repeats the h sound several times even before concluding the poem with “the hunter home from the hill” (8). A single instance of alliteration benefits a poem, but Stephenson includes multiple cases of this literary device, showing his mastery of language.

More Rules:

- If you cite more than one line of poetry, include a “/” wherever there is a line break in the poem.
- If you cite more than one line of poetry, include a “//” to represent a break between stanzas.
- If you quote more than three complete lines of poetry, you must format it as a block quote!