Formatting Titles of Various Types of Sources

Overview: When identifying source material in a paper, format the title of a source according to the type of text (book, poem, movie, play, or other source). The following rules apply for MLA and APA.

1. Designate the titles of long works, such as full-length books, novellas, plays, films, periodicals, and complete musical albums, by using *italics*.

(Please note: In certain situations, you may also underline the titles of these texts—the two formats are often interchangeable. However, per the 2009 changes that were made to MLA formatting rules, MLA style now requires titles to be italicized. Be consistent.)

A. Italicize or underline the title of a book (including novels, novellas, nonfiction works, reference books, or other complete books).

   **Examples:**
   
   *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (or *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*)
   
   *Webster’s College Dictionary* (or *Webster’s College Dictionary*)

B. Italicize or underline the title of a play or film.

   **Examples:**
   
   *The Glass Menagerie* (or *The Glass Menagerie*)
   
   *Mean Girls* (or *Mean Girls*)

C. Italicize or underline the title of a periodical (including newspapers, magazines, and peer-reviewed journals).

   **Examples:**
   
   

D. Italicize or underline the title of a full album or CD.

   **Examples:**
   
   *Rubber Soul* (or *Rubber Soul*)
   
   *Beauty and the Beast: The Motion Picture Soundtrack* (or *Beauty and the Beast: The Motion Picture Soundtrack*)

E. Italicize or underline the title of a television series.

   **Examples:**
   
   *30 Rock* (or *30 Rock*)
   
   *America’s Next Top Model* (or *America’s Next Top Model*)
2. Designate the titles of shorter works (which are sometimes parts of longer works), such as short stories, articles, poems, songs, and individual television episodes, by using “quotation marks.”

A. Place quotation marks around the title of a short story.

   Examples:
   “A Rose for Emily”
   “Hills like White Elephants”

B. Place quotation marks around the title of an article from a periodical.

   Examples:
   “GOP Names Presidential Candidate”
   “Five Signs your Boyfriend is Cheating”

C. Place quotation marks around the title of a poem.

   Examples:
   “The Red Wheelbarrow”
   “The Road Not Taken”

D. Place quotation marks around the title of a song.

   Examples:
   “Poker Face”
   “Pour Some Sugar on Me”

E. Place quotation marks around the title of an episode of a television show.

   Examples:
   “The One Where Ross and Rachel Take a Break” (from Friends)
   “The Gift” (from Buffy the Vampire Slayer)

3. When referencing a work with a title that includes the title of another text, consider the following:

A. For a title in quotation marks that includes another title in italics, designate titles using the rules above.

   Example:
   A movie review from a periodical: “The Final Twilight Movie Fails to Impress”
   (The article title is in quotation marks, while the movie it names is italicized.)

B. If both titles should be in italics, leave the internal title in standard text.

   Example:
   A book of critical articles about a novel:
C. If both titles should be designated with quotation marks, put single quotation marks around the internal title.

   **Example:**
   Newspaper obituary that mentions a poem:
   “Adrienne Rich, ‘Diving into the Wreck’ Poet, Dies at 82”

4. **A note on capitalization in titles:**

   A. Capitalize the first word in a title as well as all nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other important parts of speech. Do not capitalize conjunctions, articles, or prepositions unless one appears as the first word in a title.

   **Examples:**
   *Lord of the Flies*  
   *To Kill a Mockingbird*  
   *Of Mice and Men*  
   *Midnight in Paris*  
   “The Yellow Wallpaper”

   B. Capitalize the first word after a colon.

   **Examples:**
   *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*  
   *I’m with the Band: Confessions of a Groupie*  
   *High on Arrival: A Memoir*

5. **Formatting for titles of non-written works:**

   A. Italicize the name of a ship, aircraft, or other vehicle.

   **Examples:**
   *Challenger* (space shuttle)  
   *U.S.S. Arizona* (ship)

   B. Italicize the title of a work of art.

   **Examples:**
   Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*  
   Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

**EXERCISES:** Each of the following sentences contains one or more titles. Use italics/underlining and/or quotation marks to designate each title correctly.

1. My favorite episode of Family Guy is Stewie Kills Lois.
2. Sally can’t decide which Beatles album she likes best: The White Album or Help!
3. I read a very interesting article in the New England Journal of Medicine called The Effects of Antisocial Behavior on Teenagers.
4. Lulu thought Edgar Allan Poe’s poem Annabelle Lee was creepy, but she loved his story The Cask of Amontillado.
5. Reading The Catcher in the Rye made John want to be a writer.
6. After our class studied The Crucible in school, we performed it for the rest of the student body.
7. Kevin and Ned performed NSync’s Bye, Bye, Bye at the karaoke bar.
9. Sally hates the song Last Friday Night, but she loves the rest of the Teenage Dream album.
10. I saw the famous painting American Gothic at the Chicago Art Institute.

Answer Key:
1. My favorite episode of Family Guy is “Stewie Kills Lois.”
2. I can’t decide which Beatles album I like best: The White Album or Help!
4. Lulu thought Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “Annabelle Lee” was creepy, but she loved his story “The Cask of Amontillado.”
5. Reading The Catcher in the Rye made John want to be a writer.
6. After our class studied The Crucible in school, we performed it for the rest of the student body.
7. Kevin and Ned performed NSync’s “Bye, Bye, Bye” at the karaoke bar.
9. Sally hates the song “Last Friday Night,” but she loves the rest of the Teenage Dream album.
10. I saw the famous painting American Gothic at the Chicago Art Institute.