Working with texts

Always write about a text, a movie, a play … in the present

✅ Correct	❌ Wrong
“The author **writes**” …	“The author ~~wrote~~ …”
“Joe **speaks** very quietly in this scene.”	“Joe ~~spoke~~ very quietly in this scene.”
“The two characters **argue** with each other …”	“The two charaters ~~argued~~ with each other …”
“The writer **questions** if …”	“The writer ~~questioned~~ if …”

This is called the **literary present** — check out **some more details about it**.

Always give line references to support your argument

Example text

> The real lessons from 9/11
>
> *America risks swinging from hubris to muddle*
>
> Sep 11th 2021 — Twenty years ago America set out to reshape the world order after the attacks of September 11th. Today it is easy to conclude that its foreign policy has been abandoned on a runway at Kabul airport[1]. President Joe Biden says
> 5 the exit from Afghanistan was about “ending an era” of distant wars, but it has left America’s allies very worried and its enemies gleeful[2]. Most Americans are tired of it all: roughly two-thirds say the war wasn’t worth it. Yet the national mood of fatigue and apathy is a poor guide to America’s future role in the world. Its capabilities remain very strong and its strategy can be adapted for the 21st century — if the right lessons are drawn from the post-9/11 era.

Source: “The real lessons from 9/11”, The Economist, 11.09.2021

Reference in your own text

✅ Correct	❌ OK, but not ideal	❌ Wrong
The author writes that many US citizens are in a “mood of fatigue and apathy” (l. 7). ▶ Best option because the **line reference is clear** and still as **unobtrusive [unaufdringlich]** as possible. The **literal quote** [wörtliches Zitat] at the end is marked by **quotation marks** [Anführungszeichen]	*The author writes in line 7 that many US citizens are in a “mood of fatigue and apathy”.* ▶ Not ideal because the line reference has too much weight by making it part of the sentence structure, the literal quote does have quotation marks – so this option is not wrong but also not as good as the first one	*The author writes that many US citizens are in a mood of fatigue and apathy.* ▶ Wrong because (a) there is **no line reference** at all and (b) the last couple of words are a **literal quote** that is **not marked by quotation marks**

How to write line references

There are some abbreviations [Abkürzungen] for writing line references that you should know:

What you write	What it means	Further explanation
l. 7	line 7	refers to [bezieht sich auf] just that one line
l. 7 f	line 7 and exactly **one following line**	refers to lines 7 and 8
l. 7 ff	line 7 and the following line**s**	refers to lines 7 and *some* lines after it
ll. 7 – 10	lines 7 to 10	refers to exactly those four lines, the double “l” is for the plural “lines”, it’s usually not used with the “ff” abbreviation