

## Brief Guide to MLA Document Format

Sample essay adapted from *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 12 ed., 2012, adopted handbook for writing classes at North Lake College.

### MLA Document Format

- Set margins for top, bottom, and sides at 1 inch.  
.doc : File > Page Setup > Margins > set all margins.  
.docx : Page Layout > Margins > select "Normal."
- Set font to 12-point Times New Roman or Arial.
- Double-space entire document, including heading, title, and works cited page—no extra line spaces between heading and title, title and body, or individual paragraphs.  
.doc : Format > Paragraphs > Lines and Spacing > select "Double."  
.docx : Home > in Paragraph box, click line spacing icon > select "Double" and "Remove extra space after paragraphs."
- Indent all paragraphs 1/2 inch. Use the tab key, not the space bar.  
.doc : Default setting is 1/2 inch. To reset tab, click Format > Tabs > set default at 0.5 inch, click "Set."  
.docx : To reset tab, Page Layout > Paragraph > Tabs . . . set 1/2", click "OK."
- Unless your instructor specifies otherwise, format the heading as shown on the sample.
- Center title, properly capitalized, without added quotation marks, underlining, italics, boldface, fancy or large type, etc.
- All pages after page 1 begin at the top of the page and have no heading.
- Insert header at top at 1/2 inch:  
.doc : View > Header and Footer > select header and footer icon, tab to right margin, type last name, space once, click # icon, click "Close." To suppress the header on page 1, open Header and Footer page, click the open book icon > Layout > click "Different first page," then "Close."  
.docx : Insert > Page Number > Top of Page > type last name in front of page #. To suppress header on first page: in "Edit Header" > click Design > check Different First Page.

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Haley 1

(heading)

Vanessa Haley

Professor Moisan

English 101

6 Feb. 2008

Annie Dillard's Healing Vision (title)

It is almost a commonplace these days that human arrogance is destroying the environment. Environmentalists, naturalists, and now the man or woman on the street seem to agree: the long-held belief that human beings are separate from nature, destined to rise above its laws and conquer it, has been ruinous....

One nature writer who seems to recognize the naturalness of humanity is Annie Dillard. In her best-known work, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, she is a solitary person encountering the natural world, and some critics fault her for turning her back on society. But in those encounters with nature, Dillard probes a spiritual as well as a physical identity between human beings and nature that could help to heal the rift between them.

Dillard is not renowned for her sense of involvement with human society. Like Henry David Thoreau, with whom she is often compared, she retreats from rather than confronts human society. The critic Gary McIlroy points out that although Thoreau discusses society a great deal in *Walden*, he makes no attempt "to find a middle ground between it and his experiment in the woods" (113). Dillard has been similarly criticized. For instance, the writer Eudora Welty comments that

Annie Dillard is the only person in her book, substantially the only one in her world; I recall no outside human speech coming to break the long soliloquy of the author. Speaking of the universe very often, she is yet self-surrounded and, beyond that, book-surrounded. Her own book might have taken in

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more of human life without losing a bit of the wonder she was after. (37) . . . .

Rather than hiding from humanity, Dillard seems to be trying to understand it through nature. In *Pilgrim* she reports buying a goldfish, which she names Ellery Channing. She recalls once seeing through a microscope “red blood cells whip, one by one, through the capillaries” of yet another goldfish (124). Now watching Ellery Channing, she sees the blood in his body as a bond between fish and human being: “Those red blood cells are coursing in Ellery’s tail now, too, in just that way, and through his mouth and eyes as well, and through mine” (125). Gary McIlroy observes that this blood, “a symbol of the sanctity of life, is a common bond between Dillard and the fish, between animal and human life in general, and between Dillard and other people” (115). . . .

The cheapness and brutality of life are problems Dillard wrestles with, wondering which is “amiss”: the world, a “monster,” or human beings, with their “excessive emotions” (177-78). No matter how hard she tries to leave human society, Dillard has no choice but “to bring human values to the creek” (179). The violent, seemingly pointless birth and death of all life are . . . .

According to one critic, “Annie Dillard does not walk out on ordinary life in order to bear witness against it”; instead, she uses the distance from other people “to make meaning out of the grotesque disjointedness of man and nature” (Becker 408). Gary McIlroy says, nonetheless, that Dillard “does not succeed in encompassing within her vision any but the most fragmentary consequences for society at large” (116). Possibly both are correct. In *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard suggests a vision of identity among all living things that could inform modern humanity’s efforts to thrive in harmony with its . . . .

## Works Cited

- Becker, John E. “Science and the Sacred: From Walden to Tinker Creek.” *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea* 62 (1987): 400-13. Print. journal article
- Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: Harper, 1974. Print. book
- Johnson, Sandra Humble. *The Space Between: Literary Epiphany in the Work of Annie Dillard*. Kent: Kent State UP, 1992. Print.
- McIlroy, Gary. “*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and the Social Legacy of Walden.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 85.2 (1996): 111-16. Print.
- Suh, Grace. “Ideas Are Tough, Irony Is Easy.” *Yale Herald*. Yale U, 4 Oct. 2005. Web. 22 Jan. 2008. newspaper accessed online
- Welty, Eudora. Rev. of *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, by Annie Dillard. *New York Times Book Review* 24 Mar. 1974: 36-37. source from online database
- ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Web. 20 Jan. 2006.

## Format for Works Cited Page

- On a new page, center the title (Works Cited) on line 1. Header numbering continues from the paper.
- Double-space title and bibliographic entries as for the rest of the paper.
- Format bibliographic entries according to MLA Guidelines. Arrange entries in alphabetic order. Make hanging indents (indent all but the first line of each entry) by placing the cursor anywhere on the entry and using Ctrl + T.

For more information on MLA document format, citation of sources, and the works cited page, see *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 12 ed.