

# Working with texts

## Always write about a text, a movie, a play ... in the present tense

☐ Correct	☐ Wrong
"The author <b>writes</b> " ...	"The author <del>wrote</del> ..."
"Joe <b>speaks</b> very quietly in this scene."	"Joe <del>spoke</del> very quietly in this scene."
"The two characters <b>argue</b> with each other ..."	"The two charaters <del>argued</del> with each other ..."
"The writer <b>questions</b> if ..."	"The writer <del>questioned</del> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 2021 — Twenty years ago America set out to reshape the world order after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Today it is easy to conclude that its foreign policy has been abandoned on a runway at Kabul airport<sup>1</sup>. 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<sup>2</sup>. 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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

☐ <b>Correct</b>	☐ <b>OK, but not ideal</b>	☐ <b>Wrong</b>
<p>The author writes that many US citizens are in a “mood of fatigue and apathy” <b>(l. 7)</b></p> <p>► Best option because the <b>line reference is clear</b> and still as <b>unobtrusive [unaufdringlich]</b> as possible. The <b>literal quote</b> [wörtliches Zitat] at the end is marked by <b>quotation marks</b> [Anführungszeichen]</p>	<p>The author writes <i>in line 7</i> that many US citizens are in a “mood of fatigue and apathy”.</p> <p>► 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</p>	<p>The author writes that many US citizens are in a mood of fatigue and apathy</p> <p>► Wrong because (a) there is <b>no line reference</b> at all and (b) the last couple of words are a <b>literal quote</b> that is <b>not marked by quotation marks</b></p>