The sample paper in this appendix uses the MLA (Modern Language Association) style. This style is not the one used or described in this textbook, but it might be preferred by some teachers or for some courses. The style is used in many fields in the humanities, and especially in literature. It is simpler than the APA style. Sections and numbered section headings are usually not preferred in the MLA style. Boldface is not used for the title headings. The bibliography is headed with "Works Cited," centered, rather than "References," uncentered. Other key differences in MLA style are with citations (no year of publication is given) and bibliography (the information in the bibliographical entries is presented in a different order, with the year usually coming at or near the end, and titles of sources are capitalized). In addition, all paragraphs are indented normally in the MLA style.

If your teacher or course requires you to use the MLA style, please feel free to use this sample paper as a guide in writing your own. A sample paper can be very useful in helping to organize a paper, format a paper, use citations, or make a correct bibliography. It always helps to look at an example.

This is what a literature paper looks like:

![Diagram of MLA paper structure]

Title

Introduction

Tell us the narrowed topic and tells us what you will do with the topic.

Main Point 1
and supporting quotation/s, example/s

Body

Main Point 2
and supporting quotation/s, example/s

Main Point 3
and supporting quotation/s, example/s

Conclusion

Remind us what we learned in the paper.

Bibliography

Make a list of the sources used for the paper.

In the following paper, lettered notes indicate format features, and numbered notes indicate content or organization features.
Jane Austen's Ambivalence:  

The Expulsion of Maria in *Mansfield Park*

[Mansfield Park is Jane Austen's most complex and controversial novel.]

It is controversial because readers do not know how they should feel about the characters or the moral solutions to the story's problems. An important example of this is the punishment of Maria for her unfaithfulness to her husband. Her father cuts her off from the family and forces her to live far away, in a foreign country. This seems to be a very harsh punishment for readers in this tolerant age, and most readers think Austen approves of the penalty. The writer and critic Kingsley Amis admitted that *Mansfield Park* was a great novel, but he was disgusted by the "moralistic" elements in it, and he thought Maria's punishment was inhumane (142).

In fact, Austen is ambivalent about Maria's punishment. [Austen shows that the punishment cannot be avoided in the social world of *Mansfield Park*, but it is clear that she also thinks it is hypocritical and unfair, firstly, because she is in favor of mercy and forgiveness when there is a scandal in her previous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, and secondly, because almost everyone in *Mansfield Park* shares blame for Maria's wrongdoing, but only she is punished][This paper examines the social necessity of Maria's punishment, then the issue of mercy and forgiveness in *Pride and Prejudice* as well as in the bible, and finally the blame that Henry Crawford and the members of Maria's family share for her wrongdoing.]

Sir Thomas Bertram, Maria's father, feels that he has to punish Maria for her sin of adultery and for the scandal she has caused. She is cut off from
the family and exiled to a foreign country, though she will get enough
financial support from him to live in comfort. In one scene he explains his
reasons for the punishment:

... had there been no young persons of either sex belonging to
him, to be endangered by the society, or hurt by the society of
Mrs. Rushworth, he would never have offered so great an insult to
the neighborhood, as to expect it to notice her. ... Maria had
destroyed her own character, and he would not by a vain attempt
to restore what could never be restored, be affording his sanction
to vice, or in seeking to lessen its disgrace, be anywise accessory
to introducing such misery into another man's family, as he had
knowing himself. (715)

As head of his own house, Sir Thomas has the responsibility to guard
the morals of any other young people in it. In addition, as the head of a
family of high position, he has the responsibility to guard the morals of the
community. If he accepted Maria back, the families around him would have
to show their respect for her because she belongs to the most important local
family. Subsequently, children in other families might be influenced by
Maria. For instance, they might think that sin was glamorous and that they
could escape punishment. In such a case, Sir Thomas would be guilty of
bringing the same pain to other families that his own family has experienced.
Therefore, for Sir Thomas, it would be morally wrong to overlook Maria's
wrongdoing and accept her back into the house. In other words, he has
social responsibility, and because he is an important man, his responsibility
is even greater.

Austen portrays Sir Thomas so sympathetically that readers think
Austen must agree with him about the punishment. In fact, she only shows
why strictness is necessary for such a man. This does not mean that she
thinks it is perfectly good. Sir Thomas is wrong about many other things (for instance, the upbringing of his children, his treatment of Fanny, his first estimation of Henry Crawford) so it should not be concluded that he is right about the punishment of Maria. [To consider the matter closely, it is clear that Austen sees some problems with the punishment.]

In her previous novel, Pride and Prejudice, there is also a scandal, when Lydia runs off with Wickham. This scandal is resolved more happily, but Mr. Collins, a minister, thinks the couple should be punished severely despite the outcome. In a letter, he advises her father, Mr. Bennett, “You ought certainly to forgive them as Christians, but never to admit them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing” (430). In fact, Mr. Collins is a pompous and ridiculous man, who is always wrong about everything. Mr. Bennett laughs at Mr. Collins’ advice: “That is his notion of Christian forgiveness!” (430-431). It is very significant that this issue of judgment and forgiveness was introduced in Austen’s previous novel in relation to a scandal and a father’s forgiveness. All of this appears again in Mansfield Park in the same context. Maria’s sin (adultery) is greater, and cannot be fixed, but Sir Thomas’ punishment is very similar to Mr. Collins’ advice. This cannot be a coincidence. Austen must be ambivalent about Maria’s punishment, and critics like Kingsley Amis are wrong to think that she is nothing but a strict moralist who is only on Sir Thomas’ side.

Jane Austen was a sincere Christian who must have known the story from the bible about Jesus and the woman caught in adultery:

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, “Teacher this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” (John 8:3-5)
Like Mr. Collins, these men are official representatives of religion, and they are testing Jesus on religious law about the punishment for adultery, which is death. Jesus answers, “Let anyone among you who is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7). Jesus indicates a greater law, which is that people are all sinners and therefore need to show forgiveness and mercy to others.

This point, that all are sinners, is very important in Mansfield Park, because Maria is not the only one who does wrong, yet she is the only one who is punished. First, there is Henry Crawford, her partner in adultery, who not only seduced her but also played with the heart of her sister Julia, and tried to play with Fanny’s heart as well. He receives no punishment at all, and Austen comments about this in the last chapter:

That punishment, the public punishment of disgrace, should in just measure attend his share of the offence, is, we know, not one of the barriers, which society gives to virtue. In this world, the penalty is less equal than could be wished. . . . (717)

This is a very polite way of saying, “Is it not strange that Maria got punished, but Henry did not?” In other words, society is unfair; it is sexist. There is a double standard for men and women. Women get punished and disgraced, but men do not.

Austen is clearly very ambivalent about Maria’s punishment, and says so directly in the passage above. However, there is more. Almost every character in Mansfield Park shares some blame for Maria’s behavior. From her childhood, Sir Thomas does not supervise her education, but only encourages her to have good manners and accomplishments so that he can show her off to others. She never learns morals. Sir Thomas himself realizes this in the end (714). When his children are growing up, he lets the foolish Mrs. Norris supervise his daughters instead of himself, but she only spoils them with praise when they are children, especially Maria. Sir Thomas also
fails to stop the marriage with Mr. Rushworth, even when he realizes
Rushworth is a fool and that his daughter does not love him.

Maria’s brothers and sister also share blame. The oldest brother Tom
starts the play acting in the house when Sir Thomas is gone, giving Henry the
chance to begin seducing Maria (and Julia, too). The younger brother
Edmund tries to stop the theatricals, but finally gives up and joins them, for
his own selfish reasons. The men in the house should be protecting their
sister, but they never notice what is going on. Maria’s sister Julia knows
what is going on, but she is angry and jealous about Henry, because she is in
love with him, too. She watches them coldly, and even hopes for some
disaster:

. . . Julia was not superior to the hope that some of some
distressing end to the attentions which were still carrying on
there. . . . Julia could never see Maria distinguished by Henry
Crawford, without trusting that it would create jealousy, and bring
a public disturbance at last. (541)

This passage is very ominous: it is like a curse, and a prophecy. Later, after
Maria is married and Henry enters her life again, Julia only runs away to
protect herself from Henry’s cruel love games. She does not protect Maria or
warn anybody, though she knows the danger best.

Maria is selfish and egotistical, and has herself to blame for her
wrongdoing. She is cruel to her sister and to her fiancé and husband
Rushworth. Nevertheless, everyone fails Maria, no one protects her, and,
except for Mrs. Norris, everyone understands his or her guilt. The last
chapter reviews their failures and regrets, especially the regrets of Sir
Thomas and Tom.
shares some blame for the Maria's wrongdoing. Jane Austen is not judgmental in this novel, but ambivalent. She wants readers to think carefully about sin, guilt, blame, justice, mercy and forgiveness. She does not have easy answers, and she does not want readers to have easy answers, either. Readers who think that Jane Austen is only judgmental and moralistic in this novel are incorrect. [Like Jesus, Austen tells us, "Let anyone among you who is without sin cast the first stone" (John 8:7).]

