

The SONNET is a strict literary form. It evolved from Petrarch, an Italian of the Renaissance who wrote these poems to his great love, Laura. Shakespeare, upon traveling to Italy, discovered the complex simplicity of these poems and transferred them to Elizabethan England. The Shakespearean sonnet uses a definite RHYME SCHEME to make its point.

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets. The first 17 of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets have been traditionally believed to be addressed to a young and beautiful man of social status - the gender of the subject is clear from several of the sonnets in the series. They are all concerned with encouraging the subject to marry and have children to reproduce his beauty and they achieve this with various direct and metaphorical pleas. The next 109 sonnets (18-126) cover a wide variety of personal subjects and Petrarchan themes and include his very best examples. Sonnets 127-133 and 147-152 cover the subject of The Dark Lady - a beautiful negro woman by whom the author experiences wildly different emotions of lust and self-loathing. The remainder of the sonnets are a mixture of autobiography and poems about growing old and dying. As you can see, Shakespeare's sonnets trace his life.

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Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Hyp.
Thesis
Conclusion

How to Attack a Sonnet:

1. Count the number of lines: 14 Count the number of syllables per line: 10
2. Therefore, a SONNET has a total of 144 syllables.
3. The "endmarks" determine a sonnet's thoughts. What are they?

day temperate date grow'st thee

4. A Shakespearean SONNET is introduced by the "hypothesis", followed by the "thesis", and concluded in the "resolution" in the *couplet*. What are three thoughts that explicate this poem?

A) My love is calmer & lovelier than summer

B) Summer is windy, hot & unpredictable & ends

C) I will love you forever
words are eternal

5. Now, let us observe the mechanics of a SONNET. As you read the first line softly to yourself, try to listen for the stressed and unstressed syllables. Stressed syllables are "accented" (/) and unstressed are "unaccented" (\). METER is determined by the pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. An IAMB is a pattern of one soft followed by one hard syllable. Thus, how many IAMBs make up each line in a Shakespearean SONNET? 5

6. The RHYME SCHEME of the sonnet is abab cdcd efef gg.

7. Now, let us take apart the meaning of this SONNET:

A) How does his love compare to a summer's day?

More beautiful & gentle

B) What does he mean by Summer's lease? How does his love compare to it?

Time passes & summer ends. not his ♡.

C) What is the "eye of heaven"? What literary element is he making use of? What other literary element is used in this thought?

Sun. Metaphor / personification

D) What is he trying to say about how his love compares to the "eye of heaven"?

always there - not too much.

E) What is "nature's changing course"? What statement is he making about it?

weather changes - his "eternal summer" ♡ will not fade.

F) "When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st" suggests what? How does it relate to the "conclusion"?

His ♡ will last forever in these lines.

Forever will last (remembered) in his words.

G) In your own words, what is this poem about? What is its tone and theme?

Tone - adoration - earnest / happy why???

Theme - Eternal beauty. - compares to nature & contrasts