

Shakespearean Sonnets

Lecture by
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Shakespearean Sonnet:

- ❑ A sonnet is a fourteen-line lyric poem
- ❑ Traditionally written in iambic (Pentameter)
- ❑ The sonnet became popular during the Italian Renaissance, the time of poet Petrarch
- ❑ In Elizabethan England Shakespeare's sonnets were written
- ❑ The sonnet became the form of choice for lyric poets, treating poems with themes of love and romance.
- ❑ Sonnets were also written during period classical English verse (Dryden and Pope) and during the heyday of English Romanticism (Wordsworth, Shelley & John Keats)

Two kinds of common sonnets in English poetry:

- ❑ The Petrarchan sonnet &
- ❑ The Shakespearean sonnet (English)

- ❑ The Petrarchan sonnet contain two stanzas : octave and the sestet.

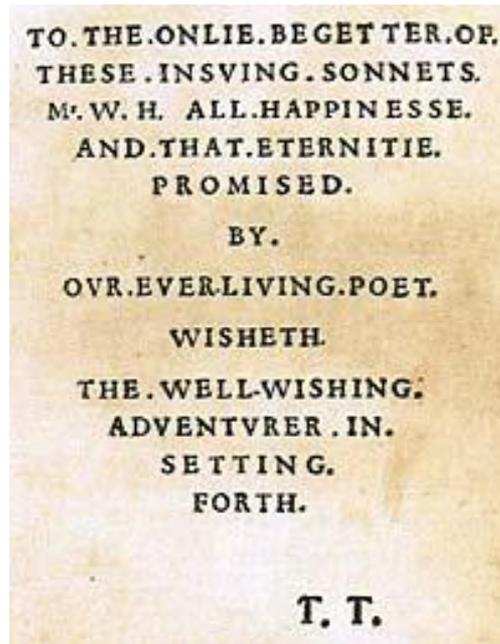
- ❑ The octave is eight lines long, which follows a rhyme scheme of ABBAABBA, or ABBACDDC.

- ❑ The sestet occupies the remaining six lines of the poem which follows a rhyme scheme of CDCDCD, or CDECDE.

The Shakespearean sonnet

- ❑ Divided into four stanzas
- ❑ The first three stanzas are each four lines long, and are known as quatrains, rhymed ABAB
- ❑ The fourth part is called the couplet, and is rhymed CC.
- ❑ The Shakespearean sonnet is often used to develop a sequence of metaphors or ideas, one in each quatrain
- ❑ while the couplet offers either a summary or a new take on the preceding images or ideas.

Shakespeare's **sonnets** (154 sonnets) first published all together in a **quarto** in 1609



Dedicatee:

W. H. Indicates: William herbert, the earl of Pembroke and perhaps the “ young Man” appeared in first 126 sonnets.

Henry Wriothsley, The earl of Southampton

About Shakespearean Sonnets:

- ❑ Shakespearean sonnets were not written as a coherent narrative but rather as individual poems.
- ❑ Although there are certain themes that recur across several individual sonnets, there is not the sort of thematic unity

- ❑ Like the Petrarch, the majority of Shakespearean sonnets have love as a theme.
- ❑ Some of the sonnets praise the beloved directly and others indirectly.
- ❑ Some suggest that love can bring joy even when the narrator is surrounded by misfortune.
- ❑ Some sonnets reveals true love endures through age and involves a deep spiritual connection rather than just superficial physical attraction.

Some random Themes:

- ❑ The drifting of time (age)
- ❑ Romantic love & Friendship (Platonic Vs Carnal)
- ❑ Desire of lust and love (Homoerotic Desire)
- ❑ Selfishness & Greed
- ❑ Aesthetic beauty
- ❑ Beauty of women ? Real and Unreal beauty
- ❑ Responsibilities of being beautiful
- ❑ considerable imagery of financial debt and obligation,
bondage and transaction
- ❑ Colour symbolism

Characters of the sonnets

- ❑ The Fair Youth, the Rival Poet, and the Dark Lady.
- ❑ The speaker expresses admiration for the Fair Youth's beauty
- ❑ He has an affair with the Dark Lady, then so does the Fair Youth.
- ❑ It is not known whether the poems and their characters are fiction or autobiographical

Fair Youth

- ❑ The "Fair Youth" is the unnamed young man
- ❑ The young man is handsome, self-centered, universally admired and much sought after.
- ❑ The sequence begins with the poet urging the young man to marry and father children (sonnets 1–17).
- ❑ Then comes a set of betrayals by the young man, as he is seduced by the Dark Lady, and they maintain a liaison (sonnets 133, 134 & 144)
- ❑ It concludes with the poet's own act of betrayal, resulting in his independence from the fair youth

The Dark Lady

- ❑ The Dark Lady is so called because she has black hair and dun coloured skin.
- ❑ The Dark Lady suddenly appears (Sonnet 127), and she and the speaker of the sonnets, the poet, are in a sexual relationship.
- ❑ She is not aristocratic, young, beautiful, intelligent or chaste.
- ❑ The Dark Lady presents an adequate receptor for male desire.
- ❑ She is celebrated in cocky terms that would be offensive to her, not that she would be able to read or understand what's said. Soon the speaker rebukes her for enslaving his fair friend (sonnet 130).

The Rival Poet

- ❑ The Rival Poet's identity remains a mystery.
- ❑ John Davies of Hereford, Samuel Daniel. George Chapman, Christophe Marlowe and Ben Jonson
- ❑ It may be that the Rival Poet is a composite of several poets through which Shakespeare explores his sense of being threatened by competing poets.
- ❑ The speaker sees the Rival Poet as competition for fame and patronage.
- ❑ The sonnets most commonly identified as the Rival Poet group exist within the Fair Youth sequence in sonnets 77-78

Sonnet 1: From Fairest Creatures We Desire Increase

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory;
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

About the Poem No. 1.

Shakespeare begins his sonnets by introducing four of his most important themes: **immortality, time, procreation, and selfishness**

Line 1 concerns procreation, especially in the phrase "we desire increase";

line 2 hints at immortality in the phrase "might never die";

line 3 presents the theme of time's unceasing progress; and

line 4 combines all three concerns: A "tender heir" represents immortality for parents, who will grow old and die

According to the sonnet's poet, procreating ensures that our names will be carried on by our children. If we do not have children, however, our names will die when we do.

But, the scenario the poet creates in these four lines apparently has been rejected by the young man

Interested only in his own selfish desires, the youth is the embodiment of narcissism, a destructively excessive love of oneself.

The youth's self-love is unhealthy, not only for himself but for the entire world. Because the young man does not share himself with the world by having a child to carry on his beauty, he creates "a famine where abundance lies" and cruelly hurts himself.

The final couplet, reinforces the injustice of the youth's not sharing his beauty with the world.

The "famine" that he creates for himself is furthered in the phrase "To eat the world's due," as though the youth has the responsibility and the world has the right to expect the young man to father a child.

Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

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 dimm'd;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

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.

Sonnet 18 is memorable for the poet's feelings reach a level of rapture unseen in the previous sonnets.

The poet here abandons his quest for the youth to have a child, and instead glories in the youth's beauty.

In the first line the poet poses a question — "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" — and then comments on it, remarking that the youth's beauty far surpasses summer's delights.

The imagery is the very essence of simplicity: "wind" and "buds."

In the fourth line, legal terminology — "summer's lease" — is introduced in contrast to the commonplace images in the first three lines.

Some phrases like "more lovely," "all too short," and "too hot"; emphasize the young man's beauty.

The proposition that the poet sets up in the first eight lines — that all nature is subject to imperfection — is now contrasted in these next four lines beginning with "But."

Although beauty naturally declines at some point — "And every fair from fair sometime declines" — the youth's beauty will not; his unchanging appearance is atypical of nature's steady progression.

Even death is impotent against the youth's beauty.

The phrase "eternal lines": Are these "lines" the poet's verses or the youth's hoped-for children? Or are they simply wrinkles meant to represent the process of aging?

In the concluding couplet: The poet is describing not what the youth is but what he will be ages hence, as captured in the poet's eternal verse — or again, in a hoped-for child.

SONNET 27: *WEARY WITH TOIL, I HASTE ME TO MY BED*

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind, when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts--from far where I abide--
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
Lo! thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

The poet describes himself as being "weary with toil" and trying to sleep. The somber mood announces a new phase in the relationship.

In the first four lines, the poet likens his state of mind to traveling afar.

Restlessly, he cannot sleep because his mind is filled with thoughts of the youth: "Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind, / For thee and for myself no quiet find."

Here, the poet seems to regard the youth's affection less securely.

Their absence from each other signals a coolness in the relationship. The physical distance, however, does not dull the youth's alluring beauty; the poet imagines the young man as a blinding, brilliant jewel.

In line 10, the poet's seeing the youth's "shadow" makes their relationship seem more tenuous, for "shadow" in this context represents the youth's image, which no longer has substance.

Sonnet 27 is one of William Shakespeare's more self-reflective poems. It is one of a small group, 27-30, that focus on restless thought, separation and love fatigue

There is no ambiguity, no metaphorical side-tracks. The language is reasonably straightforward - there is just the one simile, like a jewel alongside symbolic night.

Sonnet 30: When to the sessions of sweet silent thought

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

Sonnet 30 is a tribute to the poet's friend -- and likely his lover -- whom many believe to be the Earl of Southampton

The poet repeats Sonnet 29's theme, that memories of the youth are priceless compensations — not only for many disappointments and unrealized hopes but for the loss of earlier friends

The sonnet dealing with the poet's depression over the youth's separation

The poet's sorrowful recollections of dead friends are sparked by the lover's absence and can be quelled only by thoughts of his lover, illustrating the poet's dependence on his dear friend for spiritual and emotional support.

Friendship, disappointment, and hope are the major themes in this poem.

This [poem](#) recounts the speaker's regrets on his past failures. It begins when the lonely speaker sits without disturbance and recalls memories from the past. He gets disappointed upon the dreams and goals he has failed to achieve or reach.

he remembers his deceased friends, and also those who luckily escaped from the claws of death. From memory to memory, he regrets and moans over the sad memories he has already grieved.

He weeps for his friends who are no more in this world and realizes that he has wasted so much time.

He also feels unhappy when he recalls the slights and insults he received in the past.

However, the memory of his dear friends steal all these sorrows and still provides him hope to get along in his life.