

SONNET 130

By William Shakespeare



Sonnets

- A sonnet is a poem which consists of 14 lines
- There are 2 types of Sonnets: ELIZABETHAN (Shakespearean) and ITALIAN (Petrarchan)
- Each type has its own unique features such as rhyme scheme and structure.

Elizabethan AKA Shakespearean Sonnets



- Elizabethan Sonnets are so named as they were popular during Queen Elizabeth I reign.
- They can also be called Shakespearean Sonnets as he commonly made use of this type.
- Shakespearean sonnet structure: 4 lines + 4 lines + 4 lines + 2 lines = 14 lines.
- A grouping of four lines is called a QUATRAIN and 2 rhyming lines is called a RHYMING COUPLET.
- Therefore an Elizabethan Sonnet = 3 Quatrains + a rhyming couplet

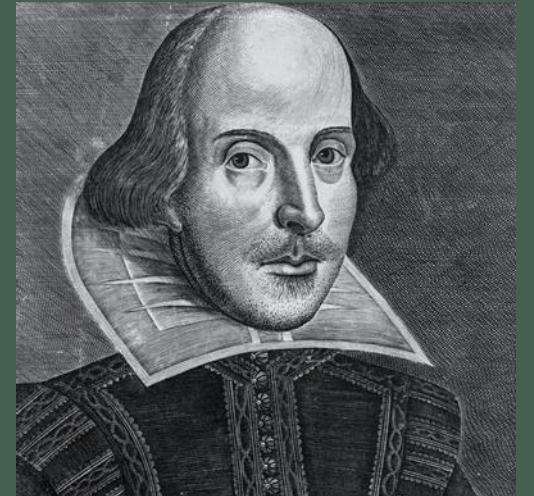
$$3(4) + 2 = 14 \text{ lines}$$

Elizabethan Sonnet cont...

- Each quatrain has a rhyming scheme: usually ABAB CDCD EFEF/
- The rhyming couplet then has its own rhyme scheme: GG
- Therefore the rhyme scheme for a Shakespearean Sonnet is

ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

- The structure of the poem also complements the content.
- The 3 quatrains pose the argument of the poem.
- The rhyming couplet concludes the argument.
- Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets.
- Written in iambic pentameter.



Italian AKA Petrarchan Sonnets

- Italian Sonnets were favoured by the Italian poet Francesco Petrarch. Hence why they are also called Petrarchan Sonnets.
- The structure of an Italian Sonnet is usually 8 lines + 6 lines = 14 lines
- The first group of 8 lines is called an OCTAVE
- The final group of six lines is called the SESTET
- The OCTAVE follows its own rhyme scheme and the SESTET has its own rhyme scheme
- The OCTAVE rhyme scheme is usually: ABBA ABBA
- The SESTET rhyme scheme can have many variations: CDC CDC or CDE CDE etc.





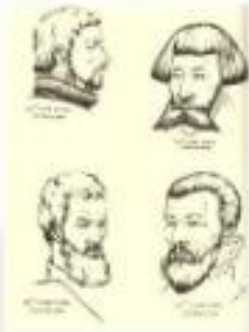
Italian Sonnet cont...

- Therefore the rhyme scheme of an Italian Sonnet can be:
ABBA ABBA CDC CDC
- The structure of the sonnet complements the argument of the poem
- The OCTAVE poses a question or states an argument
- The SESTET has a change in tone from the OCTAVE. It may answer the question or contradict the argument
- This change in tone or point of view is called a VOLTA

The Perfect Elizabethan woman

Elizabethan Hair

- Hairstyles were an important issue for the men and women of the Elizabethan time
- the hair was worn shoulder length and curled with hot irons, which were called "love locks"
- the wigs worn at this time were usually a fashion
- long beards needed little care except for occasional brushing
- short beards called for a hairdresser



Elizabethan Cosmetics

- white makeup is sign of wealth
- makeup helps hide aging
- white cheeks and red lips
- upper class favorite makeup was called ceruse



Sonnet 130

By William Shakespeare

Consider the Rhyme Scheme

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

A
B
A
B
C
D
C
D
D
C
D
E
F
F
F
F
G
G

Therefore what type
of sonnet is this?

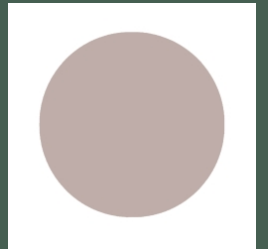
1st Quatrain

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

What type of comparison is used in these lines?

Name the comparison used in these lines?

- **Line 1: The speaker states that his lover's eyes do not shine like the sun (simile). Use of "my" - subjective**
- **A mistress can be another word for a lover.**
- **Line 2 states that her lips are not as red as coral. Red is repeated to stress how she does not compare.**
- **Coral is a reddish pink colour therefore she does not have brightly coloured lips. Her lips are just a normal red colour.**
- **Line 3 states that she does not have white skin, instead it is "dun"**
- **Dun = a dull greyish brown colour**



1st Quatrain cont...

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

- Line 4 states that the subject in the poem has wiry hair. She does not have the lushish “blowing in the wind” type of hair. Her hair is frizzy.
- Also her hair is black, not the deserved blonde colour of the time.
- Line 3 and 4 includes alliteration of the “w” to emphasise how her hair does match the idealised hair of the time.
- What do you think so far about the woman being described?

2nd Quatrain

a
n
a
s
t
r
o
p
h
e

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

Name the
comparison used in these
lines?

What stylistic devices is
being used?



- **Line 5-6:** The speaker states that his mistress' cheeks do not have a nice blushed colour. So in other words she does not have a nice colour in her cheeks (consider the effect of make-up blush)
- Damasked is usually associated with roses. A damasked rose is one that is a combination of red and white (basically pink). In Elizabethan times red or white roses were common however pink roses were very rare. The speaker does not see this colour in his mistress' cheeks
- **Line 7-8:** The speaker states that he has smelt some delightful perfumes but his mistress' breath does not smell like a perfume. In fact her breath stinks.
- "Reeks" - means stinks or a terrible smell.

3rd Quatrain

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground

Name the comparison used in these lines?

Name the comparison used in these lines?

- **Line 9-10: The speaker loves listening to his mistress speak (positive comment) however music sounds better than her voice. In other words she has a regular or even irritating voice.**
- **Line 11-12: “Treads” – manner of walking**
His mistress does not glide gracefully or float as the speaker imagines a goddess would, instead she walks like a normal person, on the ground.
In essence she is not a goddess, she is just a normal woman.
- **Alliteration in line 11 slows down the pace to mimic walking**



Rhyming Couplet

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.



What stylistic device
is being used?

- **Line 13-14: “And yet” prepares us for a contradiction to follow; it’s a turning point in tone.**
The speaker states that his love is as rare (unique/precious) as the other false comparisons (usual comparisons/ fake standards) of beauty that women are lied to about.
“Belied” – show something as untrue
The speaker states that his mistress does not measure up to the normal standards of beauty, but his love for her is unique.
- **Line 13-14: provides the concluding affirming argument: that his love for his mistress is special. His love is not based on how she compares to the standards of what is considered beautiful.**
- **Note the irony: His love is as special as how often women are lied to about these fake standards of beauty. But that happens everyday therefore his love is extra special.**

The Poem

- The poem compares the ways in which the mistress is not stereotypically beautiful; she does not have sparkly eyes, lush hair, beautiful skin etc. It lists her faults.
- The 3 quatrains list the ways in which the mistress does not measure up (8 anti-compliments).
- The rhyming couplet summarises how those measures do not matter as his love (to him) is more special than all lies that women hear about false beauty comparisons.
- The poem mocks/parodies the popular Italian sonnets of the time which praised women's beauty through exaggerations to prove his point.
He does not idealise his mistress which makes his love more rare.





The Poem cont...

- **THEMES:**
- Escape from Idealism – Shakespeare does not idealise his beloved. She is unlike the Petrarchan ideal – she is “real”, and he loves her despite her imperfections. He states clearly in the couplet that people who describe their partners with idealised comparisons, are liars. This emphasises the absurdity of Idealism.
- Femininity – This sonnet addresses the problem of stereotyping female beauty by setting unreachable standards for it. The fixed ‘definition’ of beauty is unrealistic and will make females inferior by not achieving the ideal standards of beauty. He questions real love – we should love our partners in spite of their imperfections.
- Love – The speaker expresses his love for his beloved. He describes his values of love. He states that real love is not based on outwards appearances and idealised looks. His love is based on connection and emotion, not the superficial.

The poem cont...

- **TONE:**

Lines 1 -12 Satirical, critical and sardonic

Lines 13 – 14 sincere and affirming

- *In your opinion, does the rhyming couplet make up for all the previous insults?*
- *How is this poem different from other love poems?*



Perfectly
Imperfect