

**English 9 – Semester 2**  
**Week 17**

**Shakespeare**

**The Sonnet**

Shakespeare was a writer who wrote plays in verse form. The English sonnet form was used by other poets, however William Shakespeare seemed to make it his own.

Shakespeare included sonnets into several of his plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*. In a play form, often the sonnet carried between two or more character's dialogue lines. When you hear about "Shakespeare's Sonnets" however, the reference is to a group of 154 sonnet poems published as *Shakespeare's Sonnets* in 1609. It has been generally agreed that Shakespeare wrote these sonnets between about 1592 and 1597.

**Form**

The *Petrarchian Sonnet* or the Italian Sonnet is one form of sonnet typified with a rhyme scheme of abbaabba cdecde. The Petrarchian sonnet consists of one **octave** (eight lines), followed by a **sestet** (six lines). The rhyme scheme is abbaabba cdecde.

We will, however, focus on the *English Sonnet*, made famous by Shakespeare. The English Sonnet consists of three **quatrains** followed by a **couplet**. The rhyme scheme for the sonnet is abab cdcd efef gg. Sonnets in Shakespeare's time often told a love story. However, since our purpose is to understand the form, your sonnets may be about anything. Basically it is a story told in this rhyme pattern.

**Meter**

To make this a little more complicated, the sonnet employs a specific meter. Each line of the sonnet is written in iambic pentameter. That means that each line has ten syllables – that is five groups of two syllables with the accent on the second syllable.

**Function**

The last feature of a sonnet is its function. The first two quatrains present the argument or problem or issue; the last quatrain shows how a solution comes, and the final couplet is simply the conclusion (kind of like a closing sentence). Another function would be that the first three quatrains are examples of the issue and the final couplet is the conclusion. Or, the first three quatrains are metaphorical statements of one idea, and the couplet is the conclusion.

Sound complicated? Not really! Actually it is fun to try to work out a sonnet – almost as if you are piecing together a puzzle. After you have written one, and felt awkward, you will find it easier – and may even challenge yourself to continue writing in a modification of this style!

The first step to writing a sonnet is to choose the point of your story. "You can't leave me because..."; "I won't wear a coat because..."; "I should be allowed to go out because...". Get the idea? After that, you tell your story using the elements of a sonnet that have been presented here. Your sonnets may be amusing, serious, sad, or whatever emotion you wish.

**Let's review the elements of a sonnet:**

1. Three quatrains followed by a couplet.
2. Rhyme scheme abab cdcd efef gg.
3. Iambic pentameter – each line consists of 10 syllables.
4. Three examples and a conclusion (review Function above for better explanation).

**The Life and Times of William Shakespeare**

The life and times of William Shakespeare and Elizabethan England are quite interesting. The performers in all plays were men and boys, whether the roles were male or female. This was the custom of the time. Some background on William Shakespeare can be read at:

<http://www.bardweb.net/man.html>

The Globe Theater became the venue for Shakespeare's plays and has an interesting history in itself. Read about the Theater at:

<http://www.onlineshakespeare.com/globe1.htm>

This is a brief timeline of events during Shakespeare's life:

<http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/william-shakespeare.htm>

Elizabethan England is quite interesting. Read more at these sites:

<http://www.elizabethan.org/>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1577harrison-england.html>

<http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html>

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/life.htm>

**Assignments**

1. Read the sonnets on the following pages. These include some Shakespeare Sonnets, as well as some student written sonnets.
  - Select three Shakespearean sonnets and write a paragraph explaining the story told in the poem.
    - Remember that each quatrain and the couplet have a *function* as explained earlier. This should help you in your explanation.

**Due Week 17. 50 points**
2. Carefully review the elements of a sonnet, and write your own sonnet. It is much easier to write a sonnet (or any poem) by first writing what you want to say – without worrying

about the meter or the rhyme scheme. After you have written your draft, go back and make adjustments for the meter, and fix your wording to create your rhyme scheme.

**Due Week 17 50 points**

3. **Weekly Shorts: 5 points**
4. **Journal:** Begin reading Romeo and Juliet. Read the **Prologue, Act 1** and **Act 2**. Use your journal to clarify any words or phrases that are unclear. In addition, compare the traits of the different characters and explain how they develop. **10 points**

**Shakespearean Sonnets**<http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/>**Sonnet 18**

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 un-  
 trimm'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 27**

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,  
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tir'd;  
 But then begins a journey in my head  
 To work my mind, when body's work's expir'd:

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.

**Sonnet 29**

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes  
 I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
 And look upon myself, and curse my fate,

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
 Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,  
 Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
 With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
 Haply I think on thee,—and then my state,  
 Like to the lark at break of day arising  
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;

For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth  
 brings  
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

**Sonnet 57**

Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
 Upon the hours and times of your desire?  
 I have no precious time at all to spend,  
 Nor services to do, till you require.

Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour  
 Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,  
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour  
 When you have bid your servant once adieu;

Nor dare I question with my jealous thought  
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,  
 But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought,  
 Save, where you are how happy you make those.

So true a fool is love that in your will,  
 Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.

**Sonnet 116**

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
 Admit impediments. Love is not love  
 Which alters when it alteration finds,  
 Or bends with the remover to remove:

O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
 It is the star to every wandering bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be  
 taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and  
 cheeks  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error, and upon me proved,  
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

### Examples of Student Written Sonnets

#### **Dress Shopping**

*By Amanda*

While shopping for a graduation dress  
There was nothing in the mall that I liked.  
I was starting to feel under such tress  
Nothing yet made me feel totally psyched.

People with bags were all over the place.  
I am starting to feel so desperate  
Please, oh please, give me my own space!  
Why, oh why has nothing at all yet fit?

In and out of every store that's in sight  
Wondering if I will ever find one?  
This whole mess has become oh such a plight  
My feet are feeling heavy as a ton.

In the window, a dress with perfect seems  
Alas! There it was the dress of my dreams!

#### **Gardener I'm Not**

*By Anya*

Ev'ry time I go outside to garden  
I get tangled in the watering hose  
When I don't water the ground will harden  
If I used the 'tiller I'd cut off toes!

When it is time to actually plant  
The flowers end up crooked in the ground  
So when you look at them there is a slant  
Even when I turn all of them around

During all of the scorching summers' heat  
I have a garden I really should tend  
But this hot weather makes me oh so beat  
I'll sit inside: find someone else to send

Therefore, a gardener I sure am not  
So I'll just leave all my flowers to rot.

#### **Missing You**

*By Caroline*

Sometimes I can't feel You anywhere near  
As if I will have to walk on my own.  
My stomach begins to tighten in fear  
And my small world seems to start tumbling down.

"Tell me, what I am doing wrong!" I cry.  
But it takes some time to stop and listen  
For Your very small and quiet reply  
And with life going by, what a mission!

But when I seem to be at my lowest  
And my heart won't take any more pressure  
Then, I feel Your vacancy the roughest.  
Yet it was Your Presence that I yearned for.

So back to my Bible I turn once more  
And I feel you enter my heart's small door.

#### **The Light**

*By Christopher*

It is getting hard to see the light here.  
I am afraid I'm going blind you see.  
The path to darkness isn't really clear.  
You have your own life so I'll let you be.

Please save me from these swirling, swirling sands.  
I don't know if I'm able to get up.  
I don't think that these are my favorite lands,  
All the people in this place say is "sup".

Your life is your own, that I don't need change.  
It seems it is better than mine is now.  
Your love, I see, is out of my range.  
I want you bad. How can I get you? How?

I seem to need you now, yes I do know.  
Your life is busy, so I'll let you go.

**Cindy, Dear Cindy**

*By Katie*

Cindy dear, my paint it will not come out  
No matter if I stomp it will still stay,  
Even if I cry, even if I pout  
I've been here for an eon and a day!

Oh, Cindy dear my paint still refuses  
Oh, I am so tired I need some sleep,  
But I still need to count my paint's uses  
I've tried, but I've given up counting sheep!

Cindy please give you Father a hug  
These paints are pulling and twisting my brain,  
I try, try, try, but even if I tug  
They still stay; oh it is such a strain!

I, Cindy, did think you a better chap  
It would help if you took off that darn cap!

**Falling in Love**

*By Sarah*

We may only have just met a little while back  
But our friendship grew stronger day by day  
My true feelings I could never hold back  
They came out like the sun on a spring day.

You sent my world a spinning round and round  
You were always in my head and my heart  
In my thoughts you were always around  
Holding me in your arms close to your heart.

When I told you my true feelings for you  
I thought our friendship would have ended then  
But you took my feelings to heart and you  
Swept me off my feet lifting my heart when

You told me that you loved me even more  
Than I could believe which made my heart soar.