## ENGLISH SONNET

<table>
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<tr>
<th>type of poetic line</th>
<th>stanzaic forms</th>
<th>lines</th>
<th>rhyme scheme</th>
<th>sentence structure</th>
<th>thematic pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| iambic pentameter   | 1 quatrain     | 1     | a            | single sentence   | • 1st statement of an idea  
|                     |                | 2     | b            |                   | • 1st image  
|                     |                | 3     | b a           |                   | • 1st point of view on a concept |
|                     |                | 4     | a c           |                   |                 |
|                     | 1 quatrain     | 5     | a            | single sentence   | • 2nd statement of an idea  
|                     |                | 6     | b c           |                   | • 2nd image  
|                     |                | 7     | b d           |                   | • 2nd point of view on a concept |
|                     |                | 8     | a d           |                   |                 |
|                     | 1 quatrain     | 9     | c e           | single sentence   | • 3rd statement of an idea  
|                     |                | 10    | d f           |                   | • 3rd image  
|                     |                | 11    | c e           |                   | • 3rd point of view on a concept |
|                     |                | 12    | d f           |                   |                 |
|                     |                | 13    | e g           | single sentence   | conclusion / resolution  
|                     |                | 14    | e g           |                   | (often epigrammatic) |

## ITALIAN SONNET

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<tr>
<td>iambic pentameter</td>
<td>1 quatrain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ introduction of a problem</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ presentation of a situation</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>b a</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ question</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 tercet</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>a c</td>
<td>full stop in the middle / at the end</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(a sestet)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>b d</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>b a</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|                     | 1 tercet       | 9     | c e           |                   | ➤ solution of the problem  
|                     |                | 10    | d f           |                   | ➤ comment on the situation |
|                     |                | 11    | c e           |                   | ➤ answer        |
|                     |                | 12    | d e           |                   |                 |
|                     |                | 13    | e d           |                   |                 |
|                     |                | 14    | e e           |                   |                 |
I find no peace, and all my war is done; A
I fear and hope, I burn, and freeze like ice; B
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise; B
And naught I have, and all the world I seize on; A

That looseth nor locketh, holdeth me in prison, A
And holdeth me not yet can I scape nowise; B
Nor letteth me live nor die at my devise, B
And yet of death it giveth none occasion. A

Without eye I see, and without tongue I plain; C
I desire to perish, and yet I ask health ; D
I love another, and thus I hate myself; D
I feed me in sorrow, and laugh in all my pain. C

Likewise displeaseth me both death and life, E
And my delight is cause of this strife. E

Paraphrasi del sonetto CXXXIV da “Il Canzoniere”: Non trovo Pace, e non ho mezzi per fare guerra; e temo e spero; ed ardo e son un ghiaccio, e velo sopra ‘l cielo e giaccio in terra, e nulla stringo e tutto ’l mondo abbraccio.

Una persona (tal) [: Laura] mi tiene (m’a = mi ha) in una prigione che non mi apre e non (né) [mi chiude (serra)], e non mi prende (né … mi riten) come (per) suo [prigioniero] e non mi apre (sciogli) i vincoli (il laccio); e Amore non mi uccide (non m’ancide), e non mi libera (non mi sferra = ‘non mi toglie dai ferri [della prigionia]’), e non mi vuole vivo, e non mi toglie (né mi trae) dalla sofferenza (d’impaccio) [: con la morte].

Vedo (veggio) senza [avere gli] occhi, e grido [anche se] non ho lingua; e desidero (bramo di) morire, e chiedo (cheggio) aiuto; e odio (ò in odio) me stesso, e amo un’altra (altrui) [: Laura].

Mi nutro (pascomi) di dolore, rido mentre piango (piangendo); la morte e la vita mi dispiacciono (mi spiace; al singolar e) nello stesso modo (egualmente): [o] donna [: Laura], io sono in questo stato per causa vostra (per voi).

Cfr. Claudio Monteverdi, “Si Dolce è ‘l Tormento” (text by C. Milanuzzi, XVI c.) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6e43zjwGr8
Paolo Fresu. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYvpgLqeG0c

Comprehension: Answer the following questions about the content of the sonnet.
1. Is the poet speaking with his own voice? Yes, he is.
2. Why does the poet say "I find no peace..."? It is the love for a woman that causes the poet’s pains.
4. Why is the poet able to see without his eyes and to speak without his tongue?
   The poet is able to see without his eyes and to speak without his tongue because of the power of his love.
5. Why do you think the poet says: "I love another, and thus I hate myself” (line 11)?
   The poet may already be married, and his beloved may have a husband.
6. What does the poet feed on? What does he mean?
   The poet feeds on sorrow because the poet can’t live without his love.
7. Who or what causes his "strife”?
   His love.

Sound Patterns
1. Now concentrate on the sound pattern.
a. Work out the rhyme scheme of Wyatt's sonnet and write it down. abba abba cddc ee/b. Read Petrarch's original (Il Canzoniere, CXXXIV). Complete the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhyme scheme</th>
<th>Wyatt</th>
<th>Petrarch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of quatrains</td>
<td>abba abba cddc ee</td>
<td>abab abab cde cde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tercets</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of couplets</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 2: fear / freeze</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 5: looseth / locketh</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 7: letteth / live</td>
<td>/</td>
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These alliterations underline key words and strengthen the poet's sorrow and pain.
Language and Meaning
Wyatt uses a rhetorical device to express his personal feelings; find out which of the following is the "device".

hyperbole (i.e. exaggeration) onomatopoeia oxymoron (i.e. contradiction)

2. The poem is a perfect example of the paradoxical dualities involved in Petrarchan courtly love. Underline all pairs of contrasts.

1. peace / war 6. looseth / locketh 12. desire to perish / I ask
2. fear / hope 7. holdeth / I escape 13. love / hate
3. burn / freeze 8. live / die 14. sorrow / laugh
5. naught I have / all the world I seize on 10. without eye / I see 11. without tongue I plain

What is the effect achieved by this device?
It underlines the sense of ambiguity of love and man's incapability of understanding the complexity of this feeling.

3 What kind of images does the poet use with regard to his own situation? Circle and explain them.

Peace/war, fear/hope, burn/freeze, ... They all underline the ambiguity of love.

4 Check whether each of Wyatt's oxymorons has a corresponding one in Petrarch's sonnet. Yes, it has.

Are the images presented in the same order? Yes, they are.


Contextualization
Note down the features of the "angelical woman". How do they help you understand the poet's feelings and sensations? The woman is the embodiment of physical and moral perfection; she is also a sort of guide towards Heaven for the poet who must keep his love chaste and pure. The juxtaposition between the poet's love desire and the coldness of the woman drives the poet to madness, which is here expressed by the use of oxymorons.

The Petrarchan sonnet provides the English poet not only with a form but also with the sentiments. The whole nature of the relation between the poet and his beloved had become conventionalised in terms of an idealized courtly love attitude, which Petrarch had manifested toward Laura in his love sonnets. The notion of the lover as the humble servant of the fair lady, injured by her glance, changing in mood according to the presence or absence of his beloved—was derived from the medieval view of courtly love, a concept of love which arose out of the changing attitude towards women centring round Virgin Mary as an ideal example.

The poet's 'peace' of mind has been destroyed by the 'war' he has been waging against himself in order to win his beloved. He is afraid of his supposed rejection by her, and that is why he is frozen at this thought. But at the same time he is hopeful of the prospect of winning her favour, and this leads him to 'burn' in desire for her.

The poet finds himself daydreaming about an ideal situation: "I fly above the wind..."; but the next moment the reverie breaks down and he finds himself unhappy with the thoughts of failure.

In the fourth line the poet has actually descended on the most dominant aspect of love: its possessive aspect. Love is a possessive instinct and it determines the passage of passion. When Wyatt thinks that he has not secured his beloved's love, he feels "naught I have"; but the next moment when he hopes he might win her, it seems to him that "all the world I seize on". The point is that for him the physical possession of the beloved is the physical possession of the world, that is to say, it dictates the terms for his existence in time and space.

It was a prevalent thought during the Renaissance that the amorous gaze or glance of the beloved, like the one of a sorceress, might cast a spell, which may act as a trap for the helpless lover. The words—"yet can I 'scape nowise—betray this kind of sense. The helplessness of the lover reaches its climax at the very middle, in the seventh line, when the poet speaks of death.

The poet is able to see without his eyes and to speak without his tongue because of the power of his love. But soon the sense of ambiguity of love and man's incapability of understanding the complexity of this feeling make him say that he wants to die despite he likes health. He tries to explain this complexity saying that he loves another: the poet may already be married, and his beloved may have a husband.

He feeds on sorrow because the poet can't live without his love. He may hate himself at the thought of being rejected for failing to become worthy of her. This leads him sometimes to cynicism and he laughs in his pain.

In the concluding couplet Wyatt tries to put an end to the contrary and antithetical thoughts and emotions by stating in a conceited fashion that he understands that his 'delight', that is, the object of his delight or ladylove is the cause of all these sufferings. It must be pointed out here that by providing a concluding couplet, like Shakespeare later on, Wyatt deviates from the Petrarchan model. Again the poem is marked by the absence of Neo-Platonic concept of love, the hallmark of a Petrarchan sonnet, a concept in which a speaker like Petrarch would realise the supreme divine beauty through the idealisation and worship of the spiritual beauty of a beloved like Laura.
Read the poem and do the following activities.

1. The poem is a dialogue between the poet and his beloved.

2. Who is the "she" referred to in line 5? To his beloved.

3. What does she tell the poet? She tells him he is a vain man because he wants to immortalize a mortal thing doomed to die; moreover she wants him to accept her natural decay.

4. What does he answer? Does he agree with her? The poet does not agree with her since he believes that his woman is the personification of perfection and beauty, and their love must be eternal.

Sound Patterns
I What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? It is abab bcbc cdcd ee.

2. How is the sonnet divided? Is it a Petrarchan or an Elizabethan sonnet? It is an Elizabethan sonnet.

3. Look at the punctuation of this sonnet: does the division into sentences coincide with the rhyme scheme? Yes, it does.

4. Find examples of alliterations, repetitions and musical parallelisms. How do they affect the sound of the sonnet? Suggestions: The repetitions "I wrote" (lines 1 and 3) and "but came" (lines 2 and 4) underline the wish of the poet to make his beloved eternal, a desire which will be satisfied by arts.

This sensation is strengthened by the use of some alliterations (wrote/with in line 2 and made/my and pains/pray in line 4).

Language and Meaning
I Focus on the first quatrains and circle the words referring to nature. What semantic area do they belong to? The words referring to nature are "strand", "waves" and "tide"; they belong to the semantic area of the sea.

2. Find the same identical lexical unit in lines 1-4. What is the effect conveyed by the recurrence of the same lexical units (subject + verb / verb + subject)? It emphasizes the initial sorrow of the poet.

3. Which parts of the poem are written in direct speech? The whole poem is written in direct speech, except the first quatrain which is a personal consideration of the poet himself.
4 What is the tone of the poet's answer? Have you noticed a sort of antithesis with the preceding lines?

While the first quatrain is pervaded by a general sense of sadness since the poet is not able to vanquish the destroying force existing in nature, the third quatrain is characterized by the resolute tone of the poet who has discovered that immortality can be achieved through art.

5 Focus on lines 7, 10, 11, 13, 14 and underline the verbs. Since they are all in the future tense, discuss what the poet may be hinting at.

The poet may be hinting at the power of poetry which is able to immortalize everyone and everything.

6 There is an important image in line 12: identify it and comment on its effect.

It is the image of the name of the woman written in heaven: she is as glorious as an angel, therefore she

must live in heaven.

7 What is the effect of mentioning the apocalypse in the final couplet?

It emphasizes the theme of the poem about the immortality poetry can give to any human being; the solemn consideration of the final couplet echoes the language and the tone used in the Bible or in the Gospels.

8 What do you consider to be the message of the poem? Poetry can make any human being eternal.

Connections

This sonnet expresses the concept that "poetry makes everything eternal". Find references to this theme in Latin poets, such as Horace and Ovid, and in Italian Literature. Discuss the question of poems being really eternal.

Suggestions: The concept that "poetry makes everything eternal" can be found in Dante's Divina Commedia and Petrarch's Laura.

With Amoretti Spenser descended on the permanent paradox, namely the principle of change inherent in nature that causes merciless mutations to everything in this world.

The popularity of Neo-Platonism can be accounted for by the fact that it provided a clean way out of the clutches of time or the temporal. In fact Spenser’s Amoretti can be read as a symbolic structure in which the lover’s attainment of his beloved is symbolic of the manifestation of divine beauty.

The sonnet n. 75 (One Day I wrote Her Name...) derives its singular belief from Ovid’s Metamorphosis, where he claimed to have found permanence in the monument created by art. Spenser begins the sonnet with a simple yet archetypal and obsessive and symbolic act on the part of a lover: “One day I wrote her name upon the strand, But came the waves and washed it away...”

Undeterred the poet tried for the second time; but in the same way his second attempt was futile. Seeing her name thus being repeatedly wiped out, the beloved reminded him that he was trying to immortalize a mortal thing as like her name she would also one day be wiped out from this world: “Vain man”, said she, “that dost in vain assay / A mortal thing so to immortalize...”

Unusually for a Renaissance lady, the beloved has been given a voice here, and she seems to understand the symbolic and archetypal significance of the waves levelling the sand. The evidence of the destructive properties of time available in the natural world has been grafted on to the context of the human world by the beloved. Not only that, she does reproach the lover for this. This provides the poet with the intellectual necessity to answer her in the sestet.

And while the first quatrain is pervaded by a general sense of sadness since the poet is not able to vanquish the destroying force existing in nature, the third quatrain is characterized by the resolute tone of the poet who has discovered that immortality can be achieved through art.

Typical with a renaissance poet, the answer lies in the Neo-Platonic idealization of the beloved. What he seeks to immortalize is not the physical beauty of the beloved (this belongs to the “baser things”, the earthly things subject to decay and death), but those spiritual qualities which provide the beloved with spiritual beauty. The poet is hopeful that his verses will be able to eternize the memory of the beauty of the beloved and transfigure her into a heavenly being. It is the image of the name of the woman written in heaven: she is as glorious as an angel, therefore she must live in heaven. “…you shall live by fame / My verse your virtues write your glorious name.”

Thus he thinks that he will be successful in preserving her name even after the world is destroyed in the Apocalypse.

The most important assertion, however, comes in the concluding line, in which the poet wants to use this kind of idealization as a way to preserving and immortalizing their love. He hopes further that this will help them to transcend their mundane existence and find a permanent place in the divine scheme of things: “Where whenas death shall all the world subdue, / Our love shall live, and later life renew.” The solemn consideration of the final couplet echoes the language and the tone used in the Bible or in the Gospels.
W. Shakespeare  SONNETS - 1609

After the economic and religious unrest of the middle Tudor period, followed the golden age of England. Shakespeare chanced upon the best time and country in which to live. His countrymen, not yet cramped to the service of machines, were craftsmen and creators at will. Their minds, set free from medieval trammels, were not yet caught by Puritan or other modern fanaticisms. The Elizabethan English were in love with life, not with some theoretic shadow of life. Large classes, freed as never before from poverty, felt the upspring of the spirit and expressed it in wit, music, and song. The English language had touched its moment of fullest beauty and power. Peace and order at last prevailed in the land, even during the sea-war with Spain. Politics for a few decades simplified into service paid to a woman, who was to her subjects the symbol of their unity, prosperity, and freedom.

The Renaissance came late to its glorious summer in this northern isle. In the days of Erasmus, the Renaissance in England had been confined to scholars and to the King's Court. In Shakespeare's day it had in some sort reached the people. During these same fruitful years of Elizabeth, the narrow seas, amid whose tempests English mariners had for centuries been trained, expanded into the oceans of the world where romance and wealth were to be won by adventurous youth, trading and fighting along newly discovered shores.

There is, of course, another side to all this. The overseas activity of the Elizabethans paid no regard to the rights of the negroes whom they transported into slavery, or the Irish whom they robbed and slaughtered (cfr. Edmund Spenser in Ireland) etc...

But in Elizabeth's England such victims were not numerous. as elsewhere in Europe. Elizabethan England will be remembered because it produced the plays of Shakespeare and in fact his work would never have been produced in any other period than those late Elizabethan and early Jacobean times in which it was his luck to live. He could not have written as he did, if the men and women among whom his days were passed had been other than they were, in habits of thought, life and speech.

Sonnet XVIII - Shall I compare thee

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

ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

Paraphrase: If I compared you to a summer day, I would say you are gentler and easier to love: harsh winds are wild on tender new-born spring flowers, and summer does not last very long; at times, the sun is too hot, and its brilliance is sometimes dimmed by clouds; and every natural element slowly loses its freshness, withered by the experiences of life or the passing of time; but your endless youth will never vanish, nor will you lose your beauty; not even Death will ever be proud of having you in its darkness, because you will forever live in these lines; as long as human beings can breathe and see, this poem will survive, and it will give you eternal life.

Comprehension
1. While reading the first eight lines, identify the two terms of comparison. Which proves the better? Explain why in your own words. The two terms of comparison are summer and the beloved. The beloved proves the better because he is more lovely and temperate and his beauty does not decay.

2. Read the rest of the poem and find out how the poet will make the addressee eternal. The poet will make the addressee eternal by praising his virtues and his beauty in his poetry. 

3. Now match the following sections in the sonnet with the corresponding lines.
   1. a question: line 1 Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
   2. the answer: line 2 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
   3. the justification to the answer: lines 3-8
   4. a promise: lines 9-12
   5. the result of the promise: lines 13-14

Sound Patterns
1. Write down the rhyme scheme. How is the poem organized? The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The poem consists of three quatrains and a final couplet. Considering the use of punctuation, where do you think the turning point lies? The turning point lies at the end of the second quatrain where there is a semicolon which marks a stronger pause.
2. Find examples of alliteration and repetition. Are there any enjambments?

Alliteration: "h" (line 5); "f" (line 7); "ch" (line 8); "sh" (line 11); "L" (line 14).
Repetition: more; And; fair; So long.

There is an enjambment at lines 9-10.

Language and Meaning

1. Circle the personal pronouns and possessive adjectives. Which one prevails?
   The personal pronouns and possessive adjectives are: I, thee, thou, thy, thou, thou, thee. The 2nd person singular prevails.

What quality does this feature give the poem? Tick as appropriate.

   Lyrical         reflective         dramatic

   Shakespeare's sonnets reflected his skill as a dramatist in their dramatic quality. The poet is not the only protagonist of the poem; the addressee often has the role of co-protagonist.

2. The sonnet can be divided into two parts:
   1. lines 1-8 concerning nature and its laws; 2. lines 9-14 concerning art and its symbolic order. What image connects them? What metaphorical meaning does this image acquire in the second part?
   The connection between the two parts is provided by the image of summer. In the second part summer is referred to the beloved and stands for his youth and beauty.

3. Find examples of personification in the poem.
   Examples of personification are: winds (line 3); the sun (lines 5-6); Death (line 11).

4. "Time" is one of the main themes in Shakespeare's work. Define the poet's attitude towards it in this poem and identify the theme of the sonnet.
   The poet opposes time, and the decay of beauty it implies, by means of his poetry which has eternal value (line 12).
   The theme of the poem is the relationship between art and time.

Contextualization

After reading other examples of Elizabethan poetry, choose a poem and discuss similarities and differences in form and content with this sonnet.

During the Renaissance, it was common for poets to employ Petrarchan conceit to praise their lovers. Applying this type of metaphor, an author makes elaborate comparisons of his beloved to one or more very dissimilar things. Such hyperbole was often used to idolize a mistress while lamenting her cruelty. Shakespeare, in Sonnet 18, conforms somewhat to this custom of love poetry, but gives it a distinguishing mark. In Sonnet 18, Shakespeare employs a Petrarchan conceit to immortalize his beloved. He initiates the extended metaphor in the first line of the sonnet by posing the rhetorical question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The first two quatrains of the poem are composed of his criticism of summer. Compared to summer, his lover is "more lovely and more temperate" (2). He argues that the wind impairs the beauty of summer, and summer is too brief (3-4). The splendour of summer is affected by the intensity of the sunlight, and, as the seasons change, summer becomes less beautiful (5-8).

Due to all of these shortcomings of summer, Shakespeare contends in the third quatrain of this sonnet that comparing his lover to this season fails to do her justice. While "often is gold [summer's] complexion dimmed," her "eternal summer shall not fade" (6, 9). She, unlike summer, will never deteriorate. He further asserts that his beloved will neither become less beautiful, nor even die, because she is immortalized through his poetry. The sonnet is concluded with the couplet, "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, / So long live this, and this gives life to thee" (13-14). These last two lines further clarify the theme, vowing that for all eternity his lover will be immortalized by his poetry.

Although Shakespeare appears to be conforming, he still elevates his work above the exhausted conventions of other Elizabethan sonneteers. Instead of objectifying his lover through trite comparisons, he declares that she is too beautiful and pleasant to be compared even to a day of the most enjoyable season of the year.

While most consider the realm of nature to be eternal and that of humans to be transitory, Shakespeare accentuates the death of a season and imbues his sweetheart with everlasting life. He ingeniously inverts the scheme of things in order to grant his love perpetual existence through his poetry.
Sonnet CXXX - My mistress' eyes  p. 119

1. My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;  
2. Coral is far more red, than her lips red;  
3. If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
4. If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
5. I have seen roses damask’d, red and white;  
6. But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
7. Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
8. I grant I never saw a goddess go,-- 
9. My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
10. And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,  
11. As any she belied with false compare.

Comprehension
Read the sonnet and complete the chart with details from the text.
Her eyes: nothing like the sun (line 1)
Her lips: coral is far more red (line 2)
Her breasts: dun (line 3)
Her hair: black wires (line 4)
Her cheeks: no roses on her cheeks (line 6)
Her breath: in some perfumes there is more delight (line 7)
Her voice: music hath a far more pleasing sound (line 10)
Now try to describe the lady in your own words. Student's activity.

Sound Patterns
1. Describe the rhyme scheme and the organization of the sonnet.  
The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The sonnet is divided into three quatrains and a couplet.
2. How many syllables are there in the first line? There are 10 syllables.
3. Mark the stresses: use "/" for unstressed syllables and "−" for stressed syllables.
4. Insert the slant bars ( / ) and identify the feet. How many are there?

Language and Meaning
1. Focus on the first twelve lines. Shakespeare carries out the description of the lady using a series of comparisons. Circle the terms of comparison and say:
   1. what common feature they share, or do not share;
   2. what their effect is.
   The comparisons are contained in lines 1, 2, 6, 7-8, 10. Those in lines 1 and 6 are negative, those in lines 2 and 10 are introduced by "far". They deny the woman's beauty, disappointing the reader's expectations.
2. Now discuss the function of the last two lines, i.e. the couplet. What feeling do they suggest?
   They comment / summarize what the poet said before
3. How would you define the language used by Shakespeare in this poem? Choose among the following and justify your choice.  
   Realistic ✓ / conceited high-flown

Contextualization
Sonnet CXXX has been defined "anti-Petrarchan". Discuss this interpretation with reference to examples of conventional love poetry.  
Class discussion.
Suggestion: Shakespeare deals with a woman who is different from the courteous woman celebrated in the love poetry of the period, in that she is unattractive but irresistibly desirable. T17 (Thomas Wyatt's I Found No Peace) and T18 (Edmund Spenser’s One Day I Wrote Her Name) can be compared to this text.
**Personal Response**
Shakespeare's assumption in the poem is that love and beauty are not necessarily related. Do you agree? Class discussion.

**Paraphrase:** this sonnet compares the speaker’s lover to a number of other beauties—and never in the lover’s favour. Her eyes are “nothing like the sun,” her lips are less red than coral; compared to white snow, her breasts are dun-coloured, and her hair is like black wires on her head. In the second quatrain, the speaker says he has seen roses separated by colour (“damasked”) into red and white, but he sees no such roses in his mistress’s cheeks; and he says the breath that “reks” from his mistress is less delightful than perfume. In the third quatrain, he admits that, though he loves her voice, music “hath a far more pleasing sound,” and that, though he has never seen a goddess, his mistress—unlike goddesses—walks on the ground. In the couplet, however, the speaker declares that, “by heav’n,” he thinks his love as rare and valuable “As any she belied with false compare”—that is, any love in which false comparisons were invoked to describe the loved one’s beauty.

**Commentary**
This sonnet is modelled on the tradition of the blason, a verse form that was quite popular in the 16th century. Invented by the French poet Clement Marot in 1536, it was a catalogue verse used to describe the female body, often starting from the hair and analysing each element down to the feet, focusing on meaningful details such as eyes, skin, breasts, hands and feet. This structure appealed to courtly love poets as it allowed them to portray an idealised woman whose beauty they could only admire from afar. Also Petrarch in his love poems dedicated to an idealized and idolized mistress named Laura, praises her beauty, her worth, and her perfection using an extraordinary variety of metaphors based largely on natural beauties. In Shakespeare’s day, these metaphors had already become cliché (as, indeed, they still are today), and so the result was that some idealizing comparisons were, if taken literally, completely ridiculous. My mistress’ eyes are like the sun; her lips are red as coral; her cheeks are like roses, her breasts are white as snow, her voice is like music, she is a goddess. Think how surprised they must have been while reading Shakespeare’s sonnet, which is so different from what they were used to.

The elaborate joke he plays on the conventions of love poetry is so well-conceived that the joke remains funny today. In the couplet, then, the speaker shows his full intent, which is to insist that love does not need these conceits in order to be real; and women do not need to look like flowers or the sun in order to be beautiful.

**GUIDED ANALYSIS**

**Comprehension**
1) Who is the poet addressing? - God. 

2) What does the poet want the addressee to do? He wants God to rescue him from his sinfulness, to overcome him with his power, to shatter and re-create him (lines 1-4).

3) What does the poet think of himself? He thinks he is hopelessly subjugated and that gentle action cannot persuade him to reform (lines 5-8). 

4) What are his feelings towards the addressee? He loves God (line 9).

5) What is the poet afraid of? He is afraid he will never get free from sin (lines 12-14).

**Sound Patterns**
Note down the rhyme scheme of the sonnet. The rhyme scheme is: ABBA ABBA CDCD EE. 

Then:
1. count the number of feet for each line: there are five feet for each line.

2. find the turning point and ring the word that introduces it: the turning point is at line 9 and is introduced by ‘YET’.
3. now state what the structure of the poem is like: it is divided into two quatrains and two tercets.
4. consider the elements you have gathered so far and say what kind of sonnet it is:
   it is Shakespearean in metre and rhyme but Petrarchan in the organization of the content.

Focus on the length of words and the sound quality of consonants.
1. Are most words monosyllabic or polysyllabic? Most words are monosyllabic.
2. What is the prevailing consonant sound? What is it usually associated with?
   Plosive sounds prevail; they convey a sense of violence and suddenness.
3. The choice of words and sounds creates a particular rhythm. How would you define it? Suggestion: The rhythm is hammering, explosive and broken.

Language and Meaning
1. Focus on the first quatrain. Underline the verbs. What semantic area do they all belong to? How is the relationship between the poet and God connoted?
   The verbs are:
   batter, knock, breathe, shine, seek to mend, overthrow, bend, break, blow, burn, make me new.
   They all belong to the lexical area of physical strain and violence. The poet does not praise God or offer him his humble service but goes straight to the point asking him to be destroyed and made new.

2. Consider the second quatrain.
   1. Identify the terms of the simile it contains. I (the poet) like an usurped town
   2. Now try to explain what the poet means. Who is the usurper? Sin. To whom is the town "due"? To God
   Why is reason called God's viceroy? Because it can lead man towards the truth with God's help.

3. Analyse the sestet. What images does the poet use to renew his tormented appeal to God?
   He draws from the lexical area of love, marriage and divorce.

Contextualization
1) In Donne's religious verse, the devotional theme draws much of its vigour from the secular world. Read Donne's biography and try to explain why. Suggestion: Students should point out that before taking holy orders and becoming Dean of St Paul's, Donne married sixteen-year-old Ann More, who gave him twelve children. Therefore he experienced both the passion and torment of profane love and the spiritual uniqueness of religious vocation.

2. Point out the features of Metaphysical poetry that may apply to this poem. Suggestions:
   a) The poem begins abruptly, without preparation or setting;
   b) the language is straightforward, the tone aggressive and insistent.
   c) The images are unusual and arranged in an unexpected way so as to surprise the reader.
   d) It contains paradoxes and conceits;
   e) its energy bursts upon the reader with an effect almost like that of physical violence.

COMMENT

Holy Sonnet XIV contains some of the most disconcerting images ever used in connection with God. Donne confronts his faith which is explored in a moment of personal weakness. The poem begins with the characteristic 'strong lines' of the metaphysical tradition, "Batter my Heart...", i.e. to take him by force, smashing down the door of his heart where, up to now, He has only "knocked" in too mild a way. In fact, God's presence ("breathe"), His light ("shine") and His attempts to free him from sin ("seek to mend") are not enough to save him. This abrupt invitation reveals that style and subject are perfectly intertwined in the violence of image, rhythm and anguish expressed in the poem. His passion and aggressiveness find an expression in the alternating hammer-blow rhythms and rushing sounds of the first quatrain, and in the broken rhythms of the last four lines, which become symbolic of his distressed state of mind.

Having named his "Three-person'd God" (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), the poet presents his dilemma: in order to believe, he must be conquered, destroyed and born again into faith. He begs his God to conquer him and establishes a three part argument to describe this process of destruction and rebirth.

The first part (lines 1-4) is based on metaphors and images of physical strength. The poet's soul must be "battered", "overthrown" and "broken" by his God. The poet uses a repetition of hard consonant sounds to create the effect of this physical 'battering'.

The second part (lines 5-9) establishes a war-like metaphor of a besieged town. The poet's soul is a town under siege which must be destroyed or captured by his God. He tries to let God into the town (i.e. into himself) but he fails. Reason itself, who should defend him, is powerless because she also is a prisoner of the devil.

The third and final part (lines 9-14) establishes a sexual metaphor. In spite of his love for God, the poet feels that he is married
When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly – thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait".

2: dark because the poet is blind.
4: The verb 'is' is missing.
6: the account of how he has put his talent to use;
6: he refers to God, to the Lord of the biblical parable of the talents.
9: That murmur points back to the foolish question he asked in line 7.
10: who refers forward to "they" in the following line; the usual word order would be: they who bear
his mild yoke best serve him best.
11: they refers back to "who best bear his mild yoke".
12: thousands of angels.
14: serve God.

JOHN MILTON (1608 – 1674) - SONNET XVII “ON HIS BLINDNESS”

1. When I consider how my light is spent,
2. Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
3. And that one talent which is death to hide
4. Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
5. To serve therewith my maker, and present
6. My true account, lest he, returning, chide,
7. “Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?”
8. I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
9. That murmur, soon replies: “God doth not need
10. Either man’s work or his own gifts; who best
11. Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
12. Is kingly - thousands at his bidding speed
13. And post o’er land and ocean without rest:
14. They also serve who only stand and wait”.

"betrothed") to God's enemy, the devil, from whom he cannot escape. So, in order to be set free, he paradoxically asks God to "imprison" him, since he will never be free unless He enslaves ("enthral") him and will never be chaste unless He violates ("ravish") him.

The sonnet represents the drama of those who, loving God, want to be entirely possessed by Him with the force and violence of faith against the uncertainties of a rational mind.

The adoption of the sonnet form imposes its restrictions on the magmatic energy of the contents (the poet even restrains himself to two only rhymes in the octave: ABBA, ABBA). The result is, however, on the very edge of breakdown as the poet forces the rules of the verse form by compressing syllables or by heavily stressing monosyllables.

The poem draws on Romance and Troubadour elements of love poetry, in which the lover must suffer to be worthy of his beloved, and mixes this with the theological notion of spiritual death and rebirth. The poem is violent and alive, as the poet organizes his thoughts into a logical consequence of images and uses a figurative language rich in literary devices such as alliteration (1. 4), personification (Reason, 1. 7), simile (1. 5), paradoxes (in order to be raised the poet must be knocked down, to be set free he must be enslaved, to be chaste he must be ravished), metaphors (three-personed God, divorce etc.) and a series of dramatic physical terms (knock, break, burn, blow etc.).
Note the imitative function of language: the structure of syntax mirrors the complexity of the poet’s moral struggle.

As you will have realized, the first part of Milton's sonnet poses a question arising from a particular state of mind and the second part offers an answer. The division in thought and attitude is paralleled in the rhyme scheme and in the sentence structure. Table that summarizes the main features of Milton’s sonnet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line</th>
<th>RHYME SCHEME</th>
<th>STRESS PATTERN</th>
<th>SENTENCE STRUCTURE</th>
<th>THEMATIC PATTERN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Involved structure</td>
<td>Question: the poet 'fondly' asks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full stop in the middle of line 8</td>
<td>State of mind: complaint; the poet rebels against his blindness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Easier structure</td>
<td>Answer: 'Patience... replies'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State of mind: resignation; the poet accepts his blindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3) Focus your attention on the octave:
a Who is speaking? The poet is speaking.
b What is he asking? He asks whether God expects "day-labour" from the poet who has lost his sight.

4) Focus your attention on the sestet:
a Who replies? Patience replies.
b What is the essence of the reply? The essence of the reply is that the best way to serve God is humbly to accept the tasks he asks us to perform and perform them to the best of our ability.

5) The last two lines include a striking metaphor. What is being compared to what? The kingdom of God is compared to a terrestrial kingdom with many employees travelling far and wide in its service.

6) About the whole sonnet: What is the poem about? Renaissance sonnets were mainly love poems. This sonnet deals with personal emotions and situations. He is debating with himself how his blindness can be squared with his faith in God. His conclusion is that those who want to serve God "best" should accept all that is sent as emanating from God's Will without questioning His decisions.

Summarize the debate and its resolution. Milton asks in the octave how he can serve God properly in his blindness since it hampers the use of his poetic gift. He answers his own question (in the form of a personified Patience) by saying that God can be served in many different ways. We must accept the destiny he has decided for us and serve him to the best of our ability.

7) How would you describe the language in this poem? Choose from the following adjectives, simple abstract sensuous evocative formal complex dignified emotive restrained