

Gatewood's Classroom

Sonnet Activity

Sonnets

The term sonnet originates from the Italian language, meaning little sound or song. Taking from this meaning, the sonnet is a modest 14-line lyrical poem, typically written in iambic pentameter with a defined rhyme scheme. Another tenet of the sonnet is that it expresses a single theme or sentiment, often fully developed in the last couple of lines. Many times sonnets discuss classic themes of time, separation, youth, death, and love (or unrequited love).

Conventions

14 total lines

Problem/situation in first eight lines ("turn" after line eight)

Solution/response in second six lines

Shakespearean—abab cdcd efef gg—3 quatrains and 1 couplet

Petrarchan—abba abba cde cde—1 octave and 1 sestet

Usually follow iambic pentameter—roughly 10 syllables per line

Activity

1. What is the structure of the poem?—Shakespearean or Petrarchan?
2. What is the problem or situation in the first eight lines?
3. What is the resolution or response in the second six lines?
4. What key images and diction does the poet use to develop the theme?
5. Make sure to *mark and explicate* key diction and images of the poem.



"Sonnet 29" William Shakespeare

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,

Featur'd 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'.



“America” Claude McKay

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate.
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.



“Sonnet XVII” Pablo Neruda

I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz
or arrow of carnations that propagate fire:
I love you as certain dark things are loved,
secretly, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom and carries
hidden within itself the light of those flowers,
and thanks to your love, darkly in my body
lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,
I love you simply, without problems or pride:
I love you in this way because I don't know any other way of loving

but this, in which there is no I or you,
so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand,
so intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close.

