

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Shakespearean Sonnet: Iambic Pentameter and the English Sonnet Style

Shakespeare's sonnets are written in a style called **iambic pentameter**, a rhyme scheme where each sonnet line is made of ten syllables. The syllables are divided into five pairs called iambs or iambic feet. An iamb is a metrical unit made up of one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable. An example of an iamb would be good BYE. A line of iambic pentameter flows like this:

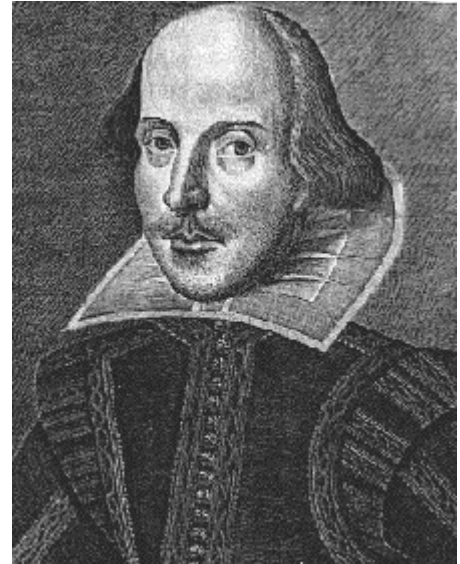
baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM.

Here are some examples from the sonnets:

When I / do COUNT / the CLOCK / that TELLS / the TIME  
([Sonnet 12](#))

Shall I / com PARE/ thee TO / a SUM / mer's DAY?  
Thou ART / more LOVE / ly AND / more TEM / per ATE  
([Sonnet 18](#))

When IN / dis GRACE / with FOR / tune AND / men's EYES  
I ALL / a LONE / be WEEP / my OUT/ cast STATE  
([Sonnet 29](#))



Also, you will notice that a Shakespearean sonnet follows this rhyme scheme:

*abab cdcd efef gg*

We call the first three parts “quatrains,” or four-line stanzas. The last two are called a “rhyming couplet,” which is almost always used to dramatically fix the problem of the story.

### Directions:

Read “Sonnet 18” and “Sonnet 29.” If reading the original versions is too difficult, you can compare the original version with the translated version. Take notes in the margins and define at least four vocabulary words in each poem that are new to you. Finally, write a short paragraph explaining which sonnet you think is a better idea of “love.”

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## SONNET 18

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

### SONNET 18 PARAPHRASE

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	Shall I compare you to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:	You are more lovely and more constant:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	Rough winds shake the beloved buds of May
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:	And summer is far too short:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,	At times the sun is too hot,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;	Or often goes behind the clouds;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,	And everything beautiful sometime will lose its beauty,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;	By misfortune or by nature's planned out course.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade	But your youth shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;	Nor will you lose the beauty that you possess;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,	Nor will death claim you for his own,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;	Because in my eternal verse you will live forever.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,	So long as there are people on this earth,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.	So long will this poem live on, making you immortal.

#### Notes

**temperate (1):** i.e., evenly-tempered; not overcome by emotions.

**the eye of heaven (5):** i.e., the sun.

**every fair from fair sometime declines (7):** i.e., the beauty (fair) of everything beautiful (fair) will fade (declines).

**nature's changing course (8):** i.e., the natural changes of age and time.

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## SONNET 29

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,	1
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,	2
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,	3
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,	4
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,	5
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,	6
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,	7
With what I most enjoy contented least;	8
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,	9
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,	10
Like to the lark at break of day arising	11
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;	12
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings	13
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.	14

### SONNET 29 PARAPHRASE

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,	When I've fallen out of favor with fortune and men,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state	All alone I weep over my position as a social outcast,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,	And pray to heaven, but my cries go unheard,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,	And I look at myself, cursing my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,	Wishing I were like one who had more hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,	Wishing I looked like him; wishing I were surrounded by friends,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,	Wishing I had this man's skill and that man's freedom.
With what I most enjoy contented least;	I am least contented with what I used to enjoy most.
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,	But, with these thoughts – almost despising myself,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,	I, by chance, think of you and then my melancholy
Like to the lark at break of day arising	Like the lark at the break of day, rises
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;	From the dark earth and (I) sing hymns to heaven;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings	For thinking of your love brings such happiness
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.	That then I would not change my position in life with kings.

#### Notes

**in disgrace (1):** out of favor.

**beweepe (2):** weep over (my outcast state).

**outcast state (2):** The poet's "outcast state" is possibly an allusion to his lack of work as an actor due to the closing of the theatres in 1592 (during an outbreak of plague). It also could be a reference to the attack on Shakespeare at the hands of Robert Greene.

**bootless (3):** useless. Shakespeare uses the word seventeen times in his plays.

**look upon myself (4):** i.e., I become occupied with self-reflection.

**Featured like him (6):** i.e., the features (physical beauty) of some other more attractive man.