

## Sonnets

### *Petrarch - Sonnet XC*

She used to let her golden hair fly free.  
For the wind to toy and tangle and molest;  
Her eyes were brighter than the radiant west.  
(Seldom they shine so now.) I used to see  
Pity look out of those deep eyes on me.  
("It was false pity," you would now protest.)  
I had love's tinder heaped within my breast;  
What wonder that the flame burnt furiously?  
She did not walk in any mortal way,  
But with angelic progress; when she spoke,  
Unearthly voices sang in unison.  
She seemed divine among the dreary folk  
Of earth. You say she is not so today?  
Well, though the bow's unbent, the wound bleeds on.

### *Shakespeare - Sonnet CXXX*

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.

### Questions for the Petrarch Sonnet:

1. How is this poem best divided up? Quatrains with a couplet? Octet and sestet? Does the poem divide up differently by rhyme scheme vs. by meaning?
2. What are the main images used in this poem?
3. Briefly, what is this poem about?
4. What is the relationship between the poet and the "you"? What can you tell about the "you"?
5. There are lots of past tense verbs in this poem--what's the relationship between the "now" of the poem and the "past" being described?

### Questions for the Shakespeare Sonnet:

1. How is this poem best divided up? Quatrains with a couplet? Octet and sestet? Does the poem divide up differently by rhyme scheme vs. by meaning?
2. Look up the underlined words and write down definitions.
3. Briefly, what is this poem about?
4. This poem has a lot of negatives--what's the purpose of the negative comparisons?
5. By the end of the poem, what is the poet conveying to us about his mistress? Why is he writing this poem?

### Questions to ask about all sonnets:

- What are the main images or metaphors/similes the poet uses? Examine them thoroughly.
- What words or images do I not understand?
- What words or images are the most important to the poem?
- What is the problem? The solution (turn or *volta*)? How does it work? Is it satisfying?

**Sonnet I**  
**by John Donne**

THOU hast made me, and shall Thy work decay ?  
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste ;  
I run to death, and Death meets me as fast,  
And all my pleasures are like yesterday.  
I dare not move my dim eyes any way ;  
Despair behind, and Death before doth cast  
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste  
By sin in it, which it towards hell doth weigh.  
Only Thou art above, and when towards Thee  
By Thy leave I can look, I rise again ;  
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,  
That not one hour myself I can sustain.  
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art  
And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.

**Additional Sonnets by Petrarch (1302-1374)**

She ruled in beauty o'er this heart of mine,  
A noble lady in a humble home,  
And now her time for heavenly bliss has come,  
'Tis I am mortal proved, and she divine.  
The soul that all its blessings must resign,  
And love whose light no more on earth finds room  
Might rend the rocks with pity for their doom,  
Yet none their sorrows can in words enshrine;  
They weep within my heart; no ears they find  
Save mine alone, and I am crushed with care,  
And naught remains to me save mournful breath.  
Assuredly but dust and shade we are;  
Assuredly desire is mad and blind;  
Assuredly its hope but ends in death.

O ye who trace through scattered verse the sound  
Of those long sighs wherewith I fed my heart  
Amid youth's errors, when in greater part  
That man unlike this present man was found;  
For the mixed strain which here I do compound  
Of empty hopes and pains that vainly start,  
Whatever soul hath truly felt love's smart,  
With pity and with pardon will abound.  
But now I see full well how long I earned  
All men's reproof; and oftentimes my soul  
Lies crushed by its own grief; and it doth seem  
For such misdeed shame is the fruitage whole,  
And wild repentance and the knowledge learned  
That worldly joy is still a short, short dream.

**Additional Sonnets by Shakespeare (1564-1616)**

XVIII.  
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 dimmed,  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:  
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.

XIX.

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,  
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;  
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,  
And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood;  
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,  
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,  
To the wide world and all her fading sweets;  
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:  
O! carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,  
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;  
Him in thy course untainted do allow  
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.  
Yet, do thy worst old Time: despite thy wrong,  
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

XXIX.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes  
I all alone beweepe 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 possessed,  
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts my self 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 remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

LX.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end;

Each changing place with that which goes before,  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.  
Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.  
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth  
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,  
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:  
And yet to times in hope, my verse shall stand  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

LXXIII.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west;  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more  
strong,  
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

CXVI

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 wand'ring 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 prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

CXLVI.

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
[Fooled by] these rebel powers that thee array--  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?  
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
Within be fed, without be rich no more:  
So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,  
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

### **An Additional Sonnet by John Donne (1572-1631)**

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

### **Two Modern Sonnets**

**by E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)**

it is at moments after i have dreamed  
of the rare entertainment of your eyes,  
when (being fool to fancy) i have deemed

with your peculiar mouth my heart made wise;  
at moments when the glassy darkness holds

the genuine apparition of your smile  
(it was through tears always) and silence moulds  
such strangeness as was mine a little while;

moments when my once more illustrious arms  
are filled with fascination, when my breast  
wears the intolerant brightness of your charms:

one pierced moment whiter than the rest

—turning from the tremendous lie of sleep

i watch the roses of the day grow deep.

**The Rosehead Nail**

by A.E. Stallings (1968-present)

*Blacksmithing demonstration, mountain arts and crafts fair,  
Monteagle, TN*

“But can you forge a nail?” the blond boy asks,  
And the blacksmith shoves a length of iron rod  
Deep in the coal fire cherished by the bellows  
Until it glows volcanic. He was a god  
Before anachronism, before the tasks  
That had been craft were jobbed out to machine.  
By dint of hammer-song he makes his keen,  
Raw point, and crowns utility with rose:  
Quincunx of facets petaling its head.  
The breeze-made-visible sidewinds. The boy’s  
Blonde mother shifts and coughs. Once Work was wed  
To Loveliness – sweat-faced, swarthy from soot, he  
Reminds us with the old saw he employs  
(And doesn’t miss a beat): “Smoke follows beauty.”