



# SHAKESPEARE **EXPERIENCE!**

## *Sonnet: What is it?*

*A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines that rhyme in a pattern.*

*It is one of the most difficult types of poem to write...  
This is because it has a restricted pattern and forces the  
poet to create the maximum passion within those 14  
lines!*

*Shakespeare wrote 154 of these poems.*

### **GOING BACK:**

- The Italian poets of the Renaissance invented the sonnet form.
- Prior to Shakespeare, the most famous sonneteer was **Petrarch** who lived in the **1300's**.
- The sonnet form was very, very popular and spread like wildfire from *Italy* to *France* and then finally to England.

- **The English Sonnet** flourished in the **1500's**.
- The pattern was different in the English language than it had been in either Italian or French.

### **THE STORY OF THE SONNETS:**

- Shakespeare's collection of sonnets reveals a story. Most of the poems speak to a young man, advising him, praising him and...nagging him. The last several poems are about **the poet's mistress**, who (as it turns out) *became the young man's mistress*.
- The poet in the sonnet isn't necessarily Shakespeare himself.
- One of the mysteries of these poems is whether or not they are autobiographical.
- Over the centuries, scholars have argued over the true identity of the young man and the mistress.
- When the sonnets were first published in **1609**, there was a dedication on the cover page...  
***"To the only begetter of these ensuing Sonnets, Mr. W.H."***

Who is that? Is it the young man? Is it a secret message to the mistress?

To this day, we do not know!

## SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS:

- He didn't invent the style named after him, but boy did he perfect it!
- The standard way to show a rhyme pattern in a poem is to use letters: \*each letter represents a different rhyme at the end of the line.

With Shakespeare's Sonnets, the pattern went like this: *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*

*\*For example: let's check out Sonnet Number 18*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? **A**  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate: **B**  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, **A**  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date: **B**  
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines, **C**  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed, **D**  
And every fair from fair sometime declines, **C**  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed: **D**  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade, **E**  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st, **F**  
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade, **E**  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st, **F**  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, **G**  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. **G**

- So, the **A** lines rhyme, and the **B** lines rhyme at the end.
- The next set of four lines follows the same pattern, but the rhymes are different from those in the first four lines, so the pattern is **C D C D**.
- The third set of four lines are also a new set of rhymes so **E F E F**.
- The last two lines rhyme, **G G** and are called a “*rhyming couplet*”.

### **HOW TO APPROACH YOUR SONNET!**

- So, first of all, you want to speak it out loud so that your ear can really get the rhyme.
- But to personalize the sonnet, you need to go back through it and put in your own punctuation and emphasis...like this:

***\*For example:** let's use *Sonnet Number 18* again.  
Now this is not **Shakespeare's** commas, periods, question marks and such, but the way **I've** selected to write it out.  
The way I would speak it.*

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:

Sometimes...

**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 wand'rest 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!**

## ***S O N N E T S   R O C K***

