

Shakespeare Sonnet Analysis

Name _____

15

When I consider every thing that grows
 Holds in perfection but a little moment.
 That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment.
 When I perceive that men as plants increase,
 Cheered and checked even by the self-same sky:
 Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
 And wear their brave state out of memory.
 Then the conceit of this inconstant stay,
 Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
 Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay
 To change your day of youth to sullied night,
 And all in war with Time for love of you,
 As he takes from you, I ingraft you new.

2. **Holds:** stays, as in hold still 4. **secret:** occult
 6. **Cheered and check'd:** urged forward and held back
 7. **Vaunt:** exult **sap:** vigor 8. **brave:** splendid. Out of memory: until forgotten (that it ever was "brave"). 9. **conceit:** conception, idea
 11. **debateth:** fights with: together with 12. **sullied:** soiled, blackened
 14. **ingraft you new:** renew you by grafting, implant beauty in you again (by my verse)

What is the huge stage?

What is the comparison in line 5?

How is this comparison accurate?

Who is the speaker in war against?

 Underline alliterative words.
 Highlight metaphors used in the sonnet.

27

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,
 But then begins a journey in my head
 To work my mind, when body's work's expired.
 For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see.
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight
 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
 Which like a jewel (hung in ghastly night)
 Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
 Lo thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
 For thee, and for my self, no quiet find.

1. **toil:** toilsome journeying 4. **To work:** to cause to work.
 6. **Intend:** set out upon 9. **Imaginary:** imagining 10. **shadow:** image
 11. **ghastly:** terrifying

Explain the metaphor of the journey.

What does the speaker see in the night?

When have you had an experience like this one?

 Draw squares around examples of assonance.
 Highlight instances of imagery.

55

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
 Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
 And broils root out the work of masonry,
 Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn:
 The living record of your memory.
 'Gainst death, and all-oblivious enmity
 Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room,
 Even in the eyes of all posterity
 That wear this world out to the ending doom.
 So till the judgment that your self arise,
 You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

3. **these contents**: what is contained in these sonnets
 4. **Than...time**: than in a memorial stone, dulled by time, which like a lazy housemaid (*sluttish*) has not swept it. 5. **wasteful**: laying waste, devastating
 6. **broils**: tumults, uprisings 7. **Nor**: neither **Mars his sword**: Mars' sword [shall destroy]. 9. **All-oblivious enmity**: oblivion hostile to everything 13. **Judgment that**: Judgment Day, when

How does #55 compare with sonnet #12?

with sonnet #15?

What allusion is used in line 7?

What does the poet mean in the last line?

 Draw squares around the words with assonance.
 Scansion the poem.

57

Being your slave what should I do but tend,
 Upon the hours, and times of your desire?
 I have no precious time at all to spend;
 Nor services to do till you require.
 Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,
 Whilst I (my sovereign) watch the clock for you,
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
 When you have bid your servant once adieu.
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought,
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
 But like a sad slave stay and think of nought
 Save where you are, how happy you make those.
 So true a fool is love, that in your will,
 (Though you do any thing) he thinks no ill.

4. **require**: demand 8. **servant**: (1) slave; (2) lover
 9. **question**: discuss **jealous**: jealous 10. **suppose**: make conjectures about
 11. **sad**: sober 13. **true**: constant **fool**: one who tamely submits **will**:
 pleasure, particularly of the senses. The word is capitalized in the 1609 quarto.
 There may be a pun on the name Will (i.e. Shakespeare); see the note on
 Sonnet 135.1.

What kind of slave does the speaker see himself as?

How is the metaphor in the poem borne out?

Have you, or anyone you know been in this situation? In what way(s) can you relate to the speaker?

 Underline the alliterative words.
 Scansion the poem.

71

No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
 Give warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell:
 Nay if you read this line, remember not,
 The hand that writ it, for I love you so,
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 O if (I say) you look upon this verse,
 When I (perhaps) compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
 But let your love even with my life decay.
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

2. **bell**: The passing bell would toll once for each year of the dead man's life.
 4. **vile world**: A conventional expression, not used with full emphasis
vilest: vilest 8. **make**: cause 10. **compounded**: mingled 11. **rehearse**:
 repeat 12. **even with**: at the same time as 14. **with me**: i.e. for loving me
 (not "together with me.")

What is the tone of the poem? What words support
 your assessment?

What time in his life is the speaker imagining?

What personal opinion does the speaker have of
 himself? How do you know?

 Scansion the poem.
 Highlight words & phrases of imagery.

91

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,
 Some in their garments though new-fangled ill:
 Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse.
 And every humor hath his adjunct pleasure,
 Wherein it finds a joy above the rest,
 But these particulars are not my measure,
 All these I better in one general best.
 Thy love is better than high birth to me,
 Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' costs,
 Of more delight than hawks and horses be:
 And having thee, of all men's pride I boast.
 Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take,
 All this away, and me most wretched make.

3. **new-fangled ill**: fashionably ugly 4. **horse**: a common plural 5 **humor**:
 temperament **his**: its **adjunct**: attendant, related. 7. **measure**: i.e.
 criterion of happiness 8. **better**: surpass 10. **prouder**: more an object of
 pride 12. **of...boast**: I boast of having the equivalent of all other sources of
 pride put together.

How does the list reinforce the message at the end?

In the couplet, what does the speaker fear will
 happen?

What echoes of sonnet #29 do you hear in this
 sonnet?

 Underline the alliterative words.
 Highlight the examples of repetition. Do you find
 it effective? Why or why not?

116

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 proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

2. **Admit impediments:** An echo of the marriage service: "If any of you know cause or just impediment why these persons should not be joined together..." 4. **bends...remove:** See sonnet 25, ln. 14. 5. **mark:** sea-mark, like *landmark* 8. **Whose . . . taken:** whose height above the horizon is known for purposes of navigation, but whose internal riches (or influence upon the earth) cannot be known. 9. **fool:** object of mockery, victim 10. **bending:** curved. **compass:** range 11. **his:** Time's 12. **bears it out:** endures. **edge of doom:** brink of Doomsday.

Do you agree with the speaker that love is constant and stable, or do you think true love is fluid and changing, something that grows with a relationship? Why?

This poem is often read at weddings. Would you want it read at your wedding? Why or why not?

In the first eight lines (called the octave) what is the metaphor?

 Underline examples of assonance.
 Highlight passages of imagery.

130

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.

1. **nothing:** not at all 3. **dun:** dark, swarthy 5. **damask'd:** mingled red and white 8. **reeks:** is exhaled (without pejorative connotation) 11. **go:** walk 13. **rare:** admirable, extraordinary 14. **she:** woman **belied:** misrepresented **compare:** comparison

Elizabethan poets were fond of conceits – comparisons of a lady's beauty to a typical idea: teeth as white as pearl, etc. How is this sonnet a satire of those types of conceits?

How does the couplet turn the poem around?

Would you want a poem like this written to you? Why or why not?

 Scansion the poem.
 Highlight passages of imagery.

135

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
 And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in over-plus,
 More than enough am I that vex thee still,
 To thy sweet will making addition thus.
 Wilt thou whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
 The sea all water, yet receives rain still,
 And in abundance addeth to his store,
 So thou being rich in *Will* add to thy *Will*
 One will of mine to make thy large *Will* more.
 Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill,
 Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

1. **Will:** (1) wishes; (2) carnal desire; (3) one or more persons named Will. This sonnet and #136 and #143 involve elaborate punning on the word. The proverb "A woman will have her will" (understood carnally) is implied. 3. **still:** continually. 13. **Let . . . kill:** do not kill with unkindness any of your wooers.

This sonnet uses puns. To what effect?

On the literal level, this poem makes little sense. How can you give it meaning on the figurative level?

What does the speaker want from the lady?

 Underline examples of assonance.
 Scansion the poem.

138

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
 I do believe her, though I know she lies,
 That she might think me some untutored youth,
 Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
 Although she knows my days are past the best,
 Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue,
 On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:
 But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
 And wherefore say not I that I am old?
 O love's best habit is in seeming trust,
 And age in love, loves not to have years told.
 Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
 And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

Another version of this sonnet is the first poem in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. 1. **truth:** fidelity, constancy 2. **believe:** i.e. appear to believe 7. **Simply:** in my pretended simpleness 8. **simple:** pure 9. **unjust:** untrue 11. **habit . . . trust:** deportment consists of apparent fidelity. 12. **told:** counted. 13. **lie with:** lie to (with obvious pun).

What double-entendre is found in line 13?

Why does the speaker "believe" his lover?

Have you ever found yourself in a relationship built on falsehoods? How did it turn out? Was it the same as the speaker's?

 Underline examples of assonance.
 What is the narrative point of view?

147

My love is as a fever longing still,
 For that which longer nurseth the disease,
 Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
 Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please:
 My reason the physician to my love,
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept
 Hath left me, and I desperate now approve,
 Desire is death, which physic did except.
 Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
 And frantic-mad with evermore unrest,
 My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,
 At random from the truth vainly expressed.
 For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

1. **still**: continuously 3. **preserve the ill**: maintain the illness 7. **approve**: learn by experience, demonstrate. 8. **Desire . . . except**: that desire, which refused medical treatment (from reason), is fatal. 9. **care**: medical care (of me). The line is an inversion of the proverb "Past cure past care." 12. **vainly**: idly, to no rational purpose.

How is the word "reason" used in line 5?

What simile is used in line 1?

How is the sense of betrayal conveyed in the poem?

An extended metaphor is used. Explain what it is and how effective it is.

 Highlight examples of repetition.

154

The little Love-god, lying once asleep,
 Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
 Whilst many nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep
 Came tripping by, but in her maiden hand
 The fairest votary took up that fire,
 Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd,
 And so the general of hot desire
 Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.
 This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
 Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,
 Growing a bath and healthful remedy
 For men diseas'd, but I, my mistress' thrall,
 Came there for cure, and this by that I prove:
 Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

9. **by**: nearby 11. **Growing**: becoming 13. **this**: the following proposition

In line 1, the words "little Love-god" refers to whom? What literary device is this?

Of what is the speaker hoping to be cured? Why?

What is a thrall? (line 12) What modern word has its roots in the word, thrall?

 Underline the alliterative words.
 Highlight the shift.