

William shakespeare's "sonnet 18"

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"Sonnet 18" written by William Shakespeare, commonly known as "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day", is one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets. Like most of Shakespeare's sonnets, "Sonnet 18" is written in Shakespearean sonnet form, which is twelve lines of iambic pentameter and ending with a rhyming couplet. Beauty is a running theme in "Sonnet 18", showing that Shakespeare places a lot on the beauty in a lover. Throughout the sonnet, Shakespeare is comparing his lover to a summer's day, while coming to the conclusion that his lover is much better than summer.

Shakespeare is the speaker of "Sonnet 18", and he is addressing his lover.

Shakespeare asks his lover "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (line one) and precedes to compare his lover to summer. Shakespeare writes "Thou art more lovely and more temperate: / Rough winds do shake the

darling buds of May," (lines two - three), meaning that his lover is lovelier and calmer than the rough winds of May that shake the baby flower buds.

The second quatrain describes what makes summer unappealing compared to the lover. "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimm'd:" (lines five - six) says how sometimes the sun is too hot but the sunshine is often dimmed, and the uncertainty of what the sun will bring is unappealing unlike the certainty of the lover's unfading beauty. The third quatrain, "But thy eternal summer shall not fade / Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest; / Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade, / When in eternal lines to time thou growest" (lines nine - twelve), explain how the lover's beauty will never fade and that death cannot take their beauty away because the lover owns their beauty.

In the ending couplet, " So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." (lines thirteen - fourteen), Shakespeare is telling his lover that their beauty will live on through the poem as long as people are living. By the constant reference to eternal beauty, a reader can infer that Shakespeare places beauty highly when considering a lover and that perhaps beauty is all Shakespeare considers when looking for a lover. " Sonnet 18" has the traditional form for most of Shakespeare's sonnets; twelve lines of iambic pentameter followed by a rhyming couplet. The twelve lines of iambic pentameter are delivered in the form of three quatrains.

Each quatrain's idea flows smoothly to each other; from introducing the rhetorical question of comparing this lover to a summer's day to listing all the reasons summer does not compare to the lover to finally stating how the lover's eternal beauty shall not fade and will live on forever through the sonnet. The three quatrains follow the abab cdcd efef rhyme scheme and the ending couplet has a gg rhyme scheme. " So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." (lines thirteen - fourteen) has the common ending couplet gg rhyme scheme for a Shakespearean sonnet. The most prominent figure of speech used in " Sonnet 18" is the extended metaphor comparing Shakespeare's lover to a summer's day throughout the whole sonnet." Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? / Thou art more lovely and more temperate:" (lines one - two) is the immediate metaphor; saying that the lover is calmer than a summer's day.

Comparing the lover's beauty to an eternal summer, "But thy eternal summer shall not fade" (line nine) is a metaphor inside the sonnet-long extended metaphor. Along with the extended metaphor running throughout the whole sonnet, Shakespeare also uses imagery. "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May," (line three) brings the image of rough, heavy winds destroying small, delicate, helpless newly sprouted flowers of springtime. "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines," (line five) invokes the image of a scorching hot summer day. "And often is his gold complexion dimm'd," (line six) can either bring a summer sun hidden by the dreary rain clouds or the daily disappearance of the sun caused by the rising moon to the reader's mind depending on how they may interpret that line.

Besides metaphors and imagery, Shakespeare uses symbolism to describe how his lover compares to the seasons other than summer. Throughout the sonnet there is symbolism to the Four Seasons, starting with spring in line three, "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May", which represents being born or rebirth. Summer, line four "And summer's lease hath all too short a date:" can represent youth and how being youthfully beautiful does not last as long as some people would like. Lines seven - eight, "And every fair from fair sometime declines, / By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;" represent autumn and the uncontrollable transition from youth to adulthood.

"Nor shall Death brag thou wandr'st in his shade" (line eleven) symbolizes death and the end of things. Shakespeare's lover's beauty is represented here, except their beauty defies the ending of summer, the change of autumn, and the death of winter; the lover is eternally youthful and

beautiful. William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" is a sonnet written to preserve his lover's beauty for all eternity as stated in the final two lines, "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." (lines thirteen - fourteen). A reader can come to the conclusion that Shakespeare values beauty above other qualities when looking for a lover because beauty is the only characteristic mentioned in the sonnet.

More specifically, Shakespeare writes about a lover with eternal beauty, showing that beauty is truly all he is looking for in a lover. While "Sonnet 18" is one of Shakespeare's best known sonnets, and has some beautifully written lines, it tells the story of a superficial affair based solely on the never fading beauty of Shakespeare's lover.