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sestet and can



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Explore aspects of the sonnet tradition through reference to a range of material you have studied. The word 'sonnet' comes from the Italian word 'sonnetto' meaning little sound or song. A sonnet is a special type of poem. The sonnet is always 14 lines long and usually expresses the poets' personal feelings or thoughts; most often connected with love or death, which are two of the most basic aspects of human existence. The poem generally uses rhyme and metre to organise the poet's ideas in a formal way.

There are several different types of sonnets which all accomplish this in a slightly different style. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet was originally developed around 1350 by Petrarch, an Italian poet (1304-1374). Petrarch had fallen madly in love with a woman named Laura, but she was a married woman and refused to become his mistress. Petrarch wrote poetry expressing the idea of courtly love and conveying his own misery and his slavery to the love of Laura; a love denied.

His verses contain accusations about the fickleness of love, the timeless quality of art and the hopelessness and devotion of eternal love. The Italian sonnet is divided into two sections by two different groups of rhyming sounds. The first eight lines are called the octave. This has two four line units that rhyme in the same way. A b b a, a b b a. The remaining six lines are called the sestet and can have either two or three rhyming sounds arranged in a variety of ways: cdcdcd, cddcdc, cdecde, cdecde, or cdcedc.

The poem is clearly divided into two sections by the two differing rhyme groups. The change from one rhyme group to another signifies a change in subject matter. It can also be said that the octave presents the 'problem' or

'scenano,' and the sestet concludes it. In other words when the rhyme scheme changes, the idea gets developed or changed. One of the sonnets written by Petrarch is called " Soleasi Nel Mio Cor". Translated by Thomas Higginson the octet tells of the death a beautiful woman he loved. She was 'a noble lady who ruled his humble heart.

' 'She ruled in beauty o'er this heart of mine, A noble lady in a humble home.
' The rest of the octet tells us in impersonal terms that she has died and how love is overcome with grief and no words can be found for their sorrow. '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. ' The alliteration 'rend the rocks' is very powerful with the picture of rocks being smashed by the force of love now with nowhere to go.

The next line is saying that it is impossible to put their sorrow into words however the word 'enshrine' also has connections with death; the death of his love. The sestet changes the poem and personifies it. The poet is now not talking about grand ideals of love and sorrow but his own grief that he feels deep inside. 'They weep within my heart; and ears are deaf Save mine alone, and I am crushed with care. ' The sestet therefore gives the poem much greater feeling and the reader is able to relate to these feelings with those that he has experienced himself.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses the Petrarchan sonnet to express her personal love, dedicated to her husband Robert, in the sonnet 'How Do I Love Thee? ' Despite the use of Petrarchan technique in this sonnet, Browning contradicts Petrarchan's ideology of courtly love by actually writing 'How Do I

Love Thee? ' in tribute to a man whom she loves and is loved by in return-
this being her husband Robert. " How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height My soul can reach, when
feeling out of sight For the ends of Being and ideal Grace. "