

My mistress eyes are
nothing like the sun”
by william
shakespeare essay
sample

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



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 damask'd, 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.

Shakespearean (Elizabethan) Sonnet

14 lines of iambic pentameter

3 quatrains and a summarizing couplet

rhyme pattern: abab cdcd efef gg

Differs from the Petrarchan sonnet developed early in the renaissance period in rhyme scheme and organization. The Italian sonnets had a rhythm that was somewhat imitated by the English sonnet's use of iambic pentameter.

Petrarchan or Italian Sonnet

Octave establishes the problem

Sestet offers the solution

Rhyme pattern: abababab cdecde

Explication:

The three quatrains of the poem employ three different forms of sensory imagery: the first is sights; the second, smells; and the third, sounds. These images are interwoven with other literary devices to paint a more complete picture of the lady. Shakespeare did not rely merely on her looks to characterize his ladylove, but proposes a contrast to the bombast of pedestal poetry. The diction has a simple elegance that suggests the same qualities are exemplified in the woman who he holds in such high esteem. Parallel structure contributes to the meaning of the poem without overwhelming the natural flow of the verses. His smooth transition from single to double line comparisons serves to capture the reader's attention as the contrasts are further developed. The first two lines begin with similes that use contrasts to describe his lady's appearance. Her " eyes are nothing like the sun" and coral is redder than her lip color. Then metaphors come into play. The first contrasts her dun colored breasts to white snow, and the next one compares her hair to black wires. The three more metaphors and another simile are developed in the next eight lines.

They describe her cheeks as pale, her breath as malodorous, her voice as less than melodious, and her walk to be a solid step on the ground. In the final couplet he uses a simile to show that she is never the less " rare" and the equal to any woman who is falsely praised. This ironic twist reveals the

poet's intentions. What makes this poem distinctive is that the comparisons and contrasts reveal a real woman without idealistic beauty, but with her own natural beauty and self worth. He has created perfection in the poem itself with a symmetrical pattern, precise rising meter and strong, exact, masculine rhyme scheme. There are no extra syllables and no near or slant rhyme. It demonstrates definite statements and supports his confident portrayal. In this manner he has paid her the greatest tribute. It is a true and lasting declaration of love for the real woman without false praise, idealism, or pretentiousness. He creates a sincere declaration of love uncolored by the bias of his emotional attachment. At the same time he has also managed to create humor and hold up for examination other poets who create perfect idols to be worshipped for their ethereal beauty.

This suggests a light-hearted parody. Petrarch was noted for his passionate praise of Laura, and he was not alone in this bent. Poets of the period often waxed sentimental over their ladies' charms. Shakespeare's verses, therefore, mock the perfect image of love and beauty in women. However, she is nevertheless loved, but for her real self, not for some enhanced illusion. This tendency of Shakespeare to make light of sentimental and romantic ideals is demonstrated in several instances in *Romeo and Juliet* when Mercutio makes light of Romeo's infatuation with the fair Rosaline. She was the maiden who possessed such beauty that Romeo believed that no other might ever compare to her. Yet within seconds of seeing Juliet, he had forgotten all about the fair Rosaline.

These examples support the attitude and purposefully light-hearted approach with which Shakespeare has portrayed his love and with the honesty in which he has praised the lady who he loves and admires. His lack of false comparisons does not make his love any less real, nor does it detract from the lady's charm. He states that his love is "rare" and as such special and enduring. He is not using false flattery as a tribute to her; instead he honors her with the act of creating a superb lyric poem that demonstrates his constant and enduring love. He does not endow her with the appearances seen in natural phenomenon, but appreciates her for who and what she is. He shows those attributes to be more lasting than physical attraction alone.