

# Essay on sonnet 18 review

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Sonnet 18 is one of William Shakespeare's best-known poems, a declaration of love for someone who is deeply adored for simply being who they are. The work itself is one of the finest examples of the sonnet format in the English literary canon, and its beautiful language transcends identity and personage to become an incredibly influential and powerful poem. This is due to the poem's lack of specific description of the person who is being adored in the poem; the qualities Shakespeare describes are universal enough to be nonspecific, and many are impossible to reach, like immortality and eternal youth. However, the act of the sonnet's creation itself is enough to create that immortality, as those qualities will remain the same within the poem (Wikipedia).

The poem itself is part of the "Fair Youth" sequence, which constitutes the first 126 sonnets of Shakespeare's canon. It is a normal sonnet, in that it consists of a trio of quatrains which are ended in a heroic couplet; it is firmly established in the Petrarchan Sonnet style, as it is a love poem about a particular beloved, who may have been unattainable (Wikipedia). The surface level reading of the poem is that it simply speaks of a person's beauty; the first few lines in particular note, effectively, that they are more beautiful than the sun, a "summer's day," and more. This is the first of the sonnets of Shakespeare that does not reference procreation at all; the first 17 mention that the man's desire is to father children, whereas here the author simply talks about maintaining the beauty of their beloved (SparkNotes). At the same time, summer as a season is equated with the seasons of life, and talks about "nature's changing course" as the circle of life, noting that their beloved will change and age just like nature does

(Wikipedia).

A sonnet is a form of poetry that was created in Italy by Giacomo da Lentini; the term is a loose derivation of the Italian word sonetto, which stands for "little song," and its rough structure involves a fourteen-line poem that has a strictly adhered-to structure and rhyming scheme (Wikipedia). In the case of Shakespearean sonnets, all of them are fourteen lines spoken in iambic pentameter (alternating stressed and unstressed syllables five times to constitute a single line); however, there are many other types of sonnets to work from. Dante is another user of Petrarchan sonnets, though some of his sonnets in *La Vita Nuova* are not Petrarchan (Wikipedia). There are also sonnets in the Occitan language, and Urdu sonnets that have been written in a variety of languages, from English to Hindi. The Spenserian sonnet is also a valid form of English sonnets, coined by Edmund Spenser - it uses linked rhymes of quatrains that are reminiscent of the Italian rhyme scheme of terza rima. Other authors who are significant users of the English or Shakespearean sonnet are Sir Philip Sidney (and his sequence "Astrophel and Stella"), John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, and Percy Bysshe Shelley (Wikipedia).

In this poem, the narrator provides a gesture of love to the lady they adore, stating that his love for her will endure no matter how much she ages. Shakespeare's use of imagery and language makes a popular and effective poem. In the very first line, the author compares the beloved to "a summer's day." This creates the impression of positive feelings and peace he feels around him, to express through this sonnet. In the second line, he continues this comparison to a summer's day by noting that he is "more lovely and

more temperate" than even that example implies. In the days of summer, he notes that "rough winds" can shake the "darling buds" of those days, and the sun can shine "too hot"; furthermore, the "gold complexion" of the sun can be "dimm'd" and lose its beauty. What's more, the speaker notes the finite nature of summer, as its "lease hath all too short a date," so all of this beauty is implied to end soon.

The gradual decline of beauty of both the beloved and the summer being used to describe it is cemented by the poet, by noting that "every fair from fair sometime declines," and this can happen for many reasons - "by chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd". This indicates that, regardless of whether the beloved dies by natural causes or chance causes premature death, the person will die. However, the writing of the poem comforts the author, as with these words the "eternal summer shall not fade / nor lose possession of that fair thou owest". Death is deliberately deceived by the creation of this poem, as it is said that he cannot "brag thou wander'st in his shade" because "in eternal lines to time thou growest" - the presence of the beloved in the sonnet defies death. The poem then ends with a rhythmic couplet which declares that "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." Here, Shakespeare showcases the point of the sonnet; he has captured the essence of the beloved in this sonnet, and so they will remain alive in the presence of the reader as long as there is someone to read it.

Sonnet 18 is one of the most well-known love poems in the history of poetry; I firmly believe that its romantic language and use of metaphor results in one of the clearest and most interesting depictions of love I've ever read. For me,

it really speaks to the endurance of true love as compared to mere infatuation; many of us have worried that we will be loved less as we get older and not as attractive. However, with this sonnet, we really get the feeling that true love means adoring someone for all time and in all circumstances; no matter what, someone in love things that " thy eternal summer shall not fade" (line 9). The poem itself is meant to be a means for that immortality; this is the gift that the author is giving their lover - eternal life through the beauty he describes in the sonnet. I really enjoy the poem, and think its language transcends its era to form a wonderful statement on the nature of art and its effect on love and life. By using the art of the written word itself to make someone's best qualities stay alive forever, Shakespeare allows us to cheat death through our own language. There is something I find profoundly romantic in that, and it is something I've carried with me ever since I read it for the first time.

## **Works Cited**

Shakespeare, William. " Sonnet 18."

" Shakespeare's Sonnets." Sparknotes. .

" Sonnet 18." Wikipedia. .

" Sonnet." Wikipedia. .