

English 146: introduction to english literature

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English 146: Introduction to English Literature March 07, 2013 Sonnet 130: A Unique Expression of Love How do you express a feeling? Nothing can be more complicated in life than trying to give expression to a state of being. Feelings are convoluted and always in a constant state of change. Part of the way people express feelings is through art, such as painting or the use of written language. In Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 a unique expression of love is presented by the writer to his mistress. His use of metaphors and similes emphasize the contrast between the typical love poem and the more realistic view of his feelings towards his mistress. Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 is a love poem that mocks the typical love sonnets of the 1600's. Typical love poems of the time consisted of using classic metaphors such as " Her hair was as dark as a starless night. " This type of writing was an expression of beauty usually written towards a person's lover generally a woman. Shakespeare, who at the time was already very famous for his sonnets, seems to have written this sonnet in mockery of other poets. Yet this sonnet is still a love poem. Sonnet 130 uses alternative ways of presenting contrasted metaphors not typically expressed towards someone you love. When you want to declare your affection towards a significant person such as a spouse, a typical method of conveying this is through compliments. Sonnet 130 does the opposite of this. Rather than exaggerating a feature of beauty on his mistress, Shakespeare instead focuses on her flaws in contrast to things of beauty. An example of this would be " I have seen roses damasked, red and white, But no such roses see I in her cheeks. " This still leaves to question of how this would be a love poem if the mistress is being insulted. The flaws Shakespeare describes of his mistress in comparison to

things of beauty is how he expresses his true feelings of love towards her. In one part of the sonnet he compares the smell of perfume to her reeking breath or the fact that music is more appealing to listen to, than her. Yet for all these comparisons, he still declares his love for her, an example of this mid poem would be “ I love to hear her speak, yet well I know, That music hath a far more pleasing sound. ”(9) This does not clarify enough as to whether this is a love poem. The poem uses the combination of his metaphors and contrast of beauty as a basis to explain his love for her. By calling attention to his mistress's flaws he puts emphasis on the fact that she is a regular woman and that he loves her all the same. An example of this is. “ 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”(11-14). This shows that he does not need to use similes to express the love he has for his mistress. The flaws of Shakespeare’s mistress is what he loves about her. These flaws are what make her the unique person she is. He does not need to exaggerate her beauty with pretty words and descriptions. Rather he details the exact opposite of this. By emphasizing “ My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun”(1). He shows that she is a very realistic person. Sonnet 130 is a love poem written for Shakespeare's mistress. The poem uses contrast and metaphors in comparison to things of beauty to highlight the faults of his mistress. By using such comparisons and pointing out her faults he emphasizes that he loves her all the same. That no matter how much her breath reeks or how plain her breasts, or how awful she may sound. He finds that these are just things that he loves more about her. That the beauty of her is her

imperfections and that false comparisons would only take away who she actually is.