



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2011 Volume II: Love and Politics in the Sonnet

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## **From Inquiry to Interpretation: A Passage through the Sonnet**

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This unit aims to explain how sonnets work and consider why students should read them. Among the many reasons why sonnets are so popular, their brevity and compactness of form is predominant. Sonnets are only 14 lines long and follow a regular iambic pattern. Owing to its powers of compression, the sonnet conveys an argument that seems to be resolved by the end of the poem. This is significant for my students because, as explained in the unit, they are very poor readers, writers, and without these basic skills—even thinkers! I want students to understand that they can actually read poetry, and hence chose the study of sonnets. One of this unit's objectives is to teach students life skills, which include the ability not just to think, but to think critically, which is a higher level of thinking. Students will develop strategies such as questioning the text. Through reading, writing, and inquiry, students will negotiate the challenges of the sonnet and acquire decisive, logical powers of thought.

(Developed for Survey of Literature, grade 9, and American Literature, grade 10; recommended for Survey of Literature, grade 9, American Literature, grade 10, and British Literature, grade 11)

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