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Detecting Shakespeare's Sonnets

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Overview

Analyzing literature is like detective work. Detectives need to know what they are looking for. Then they search for evidence. Finally they need to decide what the evidence proves. The search would have little meaning if the detective had no goal in mind.

Before delving into one of Shakespeare's plays, my twelfth graders begin by reading the sonnets. This is part of school district required curriculum. Never before, however, have we approached them with any particular focus. We would review the structure of a sonnet and notice its rhyme scheme, interpret its meaning, and look for the shift in tone. The publisher of our anthology would have chosen the sonnets. We would not do much comparing of one to another, but read each as if in a vacuum.

I would like to make our reading of the sonnets more meaningful and a more coherent part of a larger theme. In other words, I would like to provide my students with a goal. I propose a curriculum unit in which my students become sleuths as they study Shakespeare's sonnets. While I would still like my students to be familiar with the form and structure of a sonnet, I would also like them to no longer read each one on its own. I would place my students into working groups and ask them to examine a number of sonnets. Each group would be assigned a theme, and then they would begin their detective work. There are many possible themes. For example, what does Shakespeare say about love and romance? When Shakespeare fills a sonnet with economic terms, what is he saying about money and its connection to other aspects of life? How did he feel about aging and mortality, and even the afterlife? With my guidance, students would search for and hopefully find much evidence in the sonnets to enable intelligent discussion of each theme. They would still be required to read and understand five to seven sonnets, but with a purpose in mind. The culminating activity would be for each group to teach the class what they have discovered, proving their theses with evidence presented in power point presentations.

Objectives

When my students read, they resist understanding why they respond in the way that they do. If I ask why they hate one character and like another, their typical response is, "I don't know. I just do." I suppose this resistance is understandable. When many of us watch a movie, we just want the images and the story to wash over us, forgetting that craft has put these images together in particular ways to elicit our emotions. I believe, however, that whether I am watching a movie or reading literature, an understanding of the wizardry behind the curtain only serves to increase my appreciation and enjoyment. [Pittsburgh teacher] Lynn Marsico, in her curriculum unit entitled *Studying the Sonnet: An Introduction to the Importance of Form in Poetry*, quotes several scholars who make this point. She also suggests that it may be useful to place each quote strategically around the classroom as a reminder to students. She writes:

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, in *Understanding Poetry*, remind us that 'no form-no poem' (1976, p. 560). W.H. Auden said, 'In poetry you have a form looking for a subject and a subject looking for a form. When they come together successfully you have a poem.' Frances Mayes, in her book *The Discovery of Poetry*, (2001, p. 302) states that the poem's form and content are 'interactive systems...The form of a good poem occurs simultaneously with the meaning, not as a separate phenomenon.'¹

In fact, my entire course in Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition is intended to teach how the form and function of all literature work together to produce a desired effect. Our study of Shakespeare's sonnets, then, will be a continuation of this process. Each year, prior to reading one of Shakespeare's plays, we study several sonnets. This curriculum unit is written to help my students appreciate how form and function work closely together in those sonnets. We will learn the intricacies of the form of the sonnet, including the vocabulary for its various parts, so that we can speak to one another about what is going on. The history of the sonnet will be taught so that students can see the influence of past subjects and forms on the poet, and see how the changes he made in form also changed the meaning. They will then be able to appreciate the satire in Sonnets 21 and 130. They will also be able to see how Shakespeare imitated Petrarch's sonnet divisions in many cases, see how he changed these in many others, and compare how an octave plus sestet work in comparison to three quatrains and a rhymed couplet.

Students will learn how to scan a sonnet - to identify which syllables are stressed and unstressed. The purpose is to equip them to identify changes, and begin to ask why this change was made. Why does one line begin with an inverted iamb? Why does one line flow smoothly in iambic pentameter, while another stops and halts and alters the beat many times? How is this related to the meaning? The primary objective of this unit is to teach my students to ask these questions, regardless of the answer.

What This Unit is Not

There are so many fascinating topics related to Shakespeare and his sonnets that I felt it was important to explain what subjects will be deliberately avoided. Scholars have been searching for the real Shakespeare for centuries. They search birth certificates, letters, court documents, and his written works. Some scholars even contend that others have written Shakespeare's plays, and dig for proof supporting one possibility or another. Within Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, scholars have focused, some obsessively so, on the true identities of the young man of the first seventeen sonnets, the dark lady of sonnets 127 to 154, and the so-called rival poet of sonnets 78 to 86. They wonder if the lady was dark in skin color or dark in some other respect. They speculate

about the possibility that love existed between Shakespeare and the young man, perhaps even of a sexual nature. However, these are not questions for this unit. Since my ultimate interest is not Shakespearean autobiography, "it matters less to me whether the story the sonnets tell is literally true. Hamlet may not have been real, but indecision and adultery are." 2 Edmondson and Wells express it this way:

Perhaps more than any other text in Western literature, Shakespeare's sonnets have inspired a multiplicity of controversial biographical readings. All of these take as their central assumption the hypothesis that the 'I' of the Sonnets ineluctably represents Shakespeare's point of view and so gives direct access to scenes and events of his life. Any attempt to relate a work of art directly to the intimate, personal life of the artist needs to be treated with caution, even suspicion.³

I believe the best approach for my high school seniors is to concentrate on a close reading of the literature rather than speculate on questions that cannot ever be definitively answered. More than anything else, I want my students to understand that form shapes meaning, that a poet selects his words very carefully, and likewise works to have the rhythm, the rhyme, and all aspects of the form, even a form as strictly regulated as a sonnet, reflect and support the nuances of meaning. If a word or phrase suddenly shifts from iambic pentameter to another rhythm, this is not an accident, but an intentional change which, when examined, deepens our understanding of the poet's purpose. If Shakespeare moves the turn in his sonnet from line 9 to line 13, there is power in doing so that strengthens the meaning of the poem.

Background

What is a sonnet?

The next segment of this unit discusses the origins of the sonnet. The subject matter of a sonnet and its form were changed in Shakespeare's hands, yet he was influenced by what came before him. It will be instructive and interesting, I believe, to compare what Shakespeare wrote with an example of the sort of poem so popular in his era. The students will be able to see his satiric intent, and to appreciate his artistry when compared to that of less able writers.

I will also be explaining the structure of the Italian sonnet and the most common thematic content of its originators. In some ways, Shakespeare continues its form and content, but also makes significant changes. I would like my students to compare the sonnets he wrote that are closer to the Italian form with those containing his innovations. We will examine how these changes affect the message.

It is my hope that students will look at the structure of individual sonnets, and I shall ask them to begin to consider the question, "Why?" They may not guess correctly, but if they can begin to see that structure leads to meaning, and wonder how they are connected, I will have accomplished my goal.

The History

Here is what the students will learn about the history of the sonnet. The sonnet was not born in England. It originated in Italy in the twelfth or thirteenth century, but had it not been for the influence of Francesco Petrarca (1304-74), or Petrarch, as he is known in English, the sonnet might not have spread to English speaking nations. It was Petrarch

who founded the dominant paradigm of the sonnet form in Italy. His great innovation was in using the sonnet as a vehicle for exquisite versification in the vernacular. Petrarch achieved extraordinary lyrical eloquence hitherto thought to belong only to Latin by using the Italian spoken by his contemporaries and became a model of stylistic elegance for all European vernacular languages. ⁴

There will be more on Petrarch's form and themes shortly. It may not be necessary to have my students trace all of the contributions to the form of the sonnet in England, but here is a short history that may be of interest to the instructor. Sir Thomas Wyatt introduced the sonnet to England (1503-42) following his visit to Italy in 1527. He translated some of Petrarch's work into English, and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, further developed the English sonnet form. However, it was the popularity of an anthology called *Tottel's Miscellany*, published in 1557, that "is largely responsible for bringing into the mainstream of English verse a poetic form that had come into prominence during the fourteenth century in Italy." ⁵ The English sonnet was further popularized by Sir Philip Sidney, particularly in his *Astrophil and Stella* sonnet sequence, published after the author's death in 1591. It was at this point that the sonnet fad "really took off"⁶ Sidney's poems set "off a wave of English sonnet-sequences."⁷

Originally, the English sonnet (the word also means "song") did not necessarily have fourteen lines, but in 1587, George Gascoigne outlined the sonnet form in his *Certain Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English* by stating the required number of lines, the number of syllables per line, the rhyming sequence, and more.⁸ The difficulty of the sonnet form, "with its demanding formal requirements in length, meter and rhyme,"⁹ made it a suitable pastime for "the elite literary circles of court"¹⁰ as a proving ground of one's skill. The popularity of sonnets, and the custom of using them to woo one's beloved, encouraged many to try their hand at this difficult form. However, a sonnet writer who did not belong to the aristocracy remained unusual. The mere fact that Shakespeare wrote sonnets was the first of his departures from the accepted practices. Shakespeare's sonnets "clearly deviate from the strictly elite, courtly, stylized precedents of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney."¹¹

As a man not interested simply in the continuation of courtly manners, Shakespeare altered the sonnet in some important ways. But this did not mean that he was immune to the influence of Petrarch and the English sonneteers. According to Callaghan, "Shakespeare's sonnets, while they do not simply conform to Petrarchan conventions, and indeed are often written against them, are always conceived in relation to them."¹²

The subject matter of a Petrarchan sonnet was restricted to particular themes. A typical Petrarchan sonnet concerned unrequited and unconsummated love. We would hear of a poor, suffering lover who laments the coldness of his beloved. Shakespeare followed this model in *Romeo and Juliet* in representing Romeo's attitude toward the character Rosaline. This is the woman beloved by Romeo as the play begins, the one who causes [him] so much grief that he shuts himself up in his room and closes the curtains, making the day like night. She had refused Romeo's advances, preferring to live a chaste life. "The fundamental premiss [sic] of the Petrarchan sonnet is simple: a man loves and desires a beautiful woman who is dedicated to chastity."¹³

What changes did Shakespeare bring to the subject matter of a sonnet? Shakespeare did not conform to the themes of traditional courtly love, but "discovered his own system of expression."¹⁴ He found new themes and new honesty to express in his sonnets. He explored promiscuousness, adultery, infatuation, self-loathing, the unpleasant effects of old age, and many other topics that had not been the "accepted" subjects of the sonnet. He also approached them in a new way. Rather than focusing on the exaggerated perfection of the target of

his affection, for instance, Shakespeare allowed for flaws. In a Shakespeare sonnet, such as 130, we learn the "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." This was both an ironic twist on the usual Renaissance love poem, and a deviation from accepted subject matter.

To see what sort of poetry was common for the age, the sort of poem being parodied by Shakespeare, I would like my students to read the following. It is Sonnet 7 from a hundred sonnets by Thomas Watson written in 1582 entitled *Hekatompathia or Passionate Century of Love*, as quoted by Edmondson and Wells:¹⁵

Hark you that list to hear what saint I serve: Her yellow locks exceed the beaten gold; Her sparkling eyes in heaven a place deserve; Her forehead high and fair of comely mould; Her words are music all of silver sound; Her wit so sharp as like can scarce be found: Each eyebrow hangs like Iris in the skies; Her eagle's nose is straight of stately flame; Her lips more red than any coral stone; Her neck more white, than aged swans that moan; Her breast transparent is, like crystal rock; Her finger long, fit for Apollo's lute; Her slipper such as Momus dare not mock; Her virtues all so great as make me mute: What other parts she hath I need not say, Whose face alone is cause of my decay.

If we compare this to a sonnet by Shakespeare, we see enormous differences. As Paul Fry, Professor of English at Yale University, put it in our seminar, Shakespeare presented a "nuanced evocation of feelings instead of extreme hyperbole."

At this point, it might be fun to ask my students, "What difficult tasks does a man of the 21st century try to perform to prove his love?" Do we even have any modern-day counterpart?

The form

As part of their investigation of how form follows function, I plan on teaching the difference in organization between the Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnet. The form of the Petrarchan sonnet had very particular characteristics. It had fourteen lines of ten syllables each. It had a "major system" of eight lines, called an octave. This could be organized in two quatrains. The rhyming sequence of the octave was arranged so that the end of the first, fourth, fifth and eighth lines have one rhyme, and the second, third, sixth and seventh have a second rhyming sound. This would be notated as *abbaabba*. This was followed by a "minor system" of six lines, also known as a sestet with a rhyme scheme of *ccdeed*. This form provided a platform for a two-part statement of the question or problem in the octave, and the answer or solution in the sestet. The transition between the two, called the *volta* in Italian, or the "turn" in English, usually took place at the beginning of the sestet in the ninth line.

The Shakespearean sonnet differed in important ways. It maintained the fourteen ten syllable lines, but now they were organized into three quatrains (four lines) and a rhyming couplet. The typical rhyme scheme was *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*. The turn, or volta, often came at the start of the third quatrain - the ninth line - but not necessarily. It is not possible to state that there was one and only one pattern for Shakespeare's sonnets. "Attempting to speak generally about the relationship of couplet to quatrains, the critics have usually hedged their bets. The expenditure of words like 'commonly,' 'frequently,' and 'often' is greater in the literature about Shakespeare's sonnets than in any I know."¹⁶ However, it is possible to state with confidence that Shakespeare did not always follow the pattern used by Petrarch, or for that matter, other English sonneteers. Some of the reason for the change was expediency. Robert Matz explains:

While the rhyme schemes of the Italian sonnet usually emphasized a split between the sonnet's first eight lines and its last six, English sonneteers most commonly employed a rhyme scheme that broke the sonnet's fourteen lines in to three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet. There were practical reasons for this. It is harder to find words that rhyme in English than in Romance languages like Italian, French and Spanish, so dividing the sonnet into quatrains alleviated the need to carry two rhymes through eight lines.¹⁷

However, there were other consequences of this change in form that I will now describe. The description to follow, and the sonnets I have cited, will form the basis for a lesson that is at the core of this curriculum unit.

This change in form is reflected in a change of feeling, emphasis, or force of the meaning. As with other sonnets, the first and second quatrains present a problem. The variation comes in the expansion of the exposition of the problem from two quatrains to three, with the conclusion or answer coming finally in the last two lines, the rhymed couplet. One anonymous Shakespeare scholar of 1873 quoted by Booth called the problem and the solution the "appositions and contrasts."¹⁸ These "are commonly summed up and enforced in the couplet, which frequently presents the result of them in some other light or aspect than that conveyed in the quatrains, often giving great piquancy and increased intensity to what has gone before."¹⁹

The most common arrangement of the English Renaissance sonnet facilitates this kind of unexpectedly sharp statement... Left over from the sonnets' three quatrains was the final rhyming couplet, which had its own attractions. The pithiness of the couplet lends itself to providing a sudden solution to the problem explored in the previous twelve lines.²⁰

The power of postponing the conclusion until the final couplet is apparent in Sonnet 30:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought, I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought, And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.

Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow, For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe, And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone, And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoan'd moan, Which I new pay as if not paid before.

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend, All losses are restored and sorrows end.

Sonnet 12, on the other hand, makes its turn at the start of line nine:

When I do count the clock that tells the time And see the brave day sunk in hideous night,
When I behold the violet past prime And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white,
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves, Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard-

Then of thy beauty do I question make That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake, And die as fast as they see others

grow, And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

In Sonnet 30, we are forced to withstand the terrible suffering for an additional four lines, when finally the poet and the reader are released from the pain at "I think on thee, dear friend." The poet also changes his mood when he thinks of another. This time it is "thy beauty" that he contemplates, sad that this must go "among the wastes of time" as do leaves on the trees. Not only must the reader suffer less within the span of eight lines, but the resolution is less complete, less free of any sad feelings since the possibility of the loss of the friend's beauty remains present.

David West compares Sonnet 34 to Sonnets 29 and 30, stating: "in all of [them] a long complaint is followed by a couplet in which all discontent is dissolved in praise of the beloved."²¹ Again, in Sonnet 34, the reader gets a well-earned relief in the rhymed couplet. The poet's suffering begins with a weather metaphor. A "beauteous day" was promised, but instead the poet is forced to "travel forth without my cloak." He suffers with disgrace for twelve long lines, still feeling "the strong offence's cross" in line 12. With an exclamation of "Ah!" line 13 begins, releasing the poet from his pain when he sees his love shed tears. The power of the release is strengthened by the delay.

Sonnet Notation

In order to scan Shakespeare's sonnets, my students will need to learn the proper notation. The information I am providing here is what I plan to teach.

For the most part, the sonnet has always had a fixed form containing fourteen lines with a set pattern of rhythm and rhyme. The rhyming pattern is indicated using letters. For instance, when every other line rhymes, we say its pattern is *abab, cdcd*, and so on. Here are the opening lines of Shakespeare's sonnet #130. I have used **bold** print with accents for the stressed syllables, and non-bold print to indicate unstressed syllables for the purposes of typing this unit. However, when teaching my students, I would demonstrate the marks above each syllable to my students. We will use marks like these for writing on our papers and on the board: u / u / u / u / u

My místress' eyes are nóthing líke the sún; - a

Córal is fár more réd than hér líps' red; - b

If snów be whíte, why thén her breásts are dún; - a

If haírs be wíres, bláck wíres grów on her héad. - b

Sun rhymes with *dun*, and *red* rhymes with *head*, so these are labeled *abab* using lower case letters. We continue with the alphabet, using a new letter for each new rhyme. In lines 5 to 8 we have *white/cheeks/delight/reeks* labeled *cdcd*. Lines 9-12 end with *know/sound/go/* and *ground* labeled *efef*. Shakespeare's sonnets end with two lines that rhyme with one another, called a rhyming couplet. These are labeled *gg*.

Sonnets generally follow an equally proscribed pattern of rhythm, with ten alternating unstressed and stressed syllables. Each pair of syllables with this pattern is called an iamb, and when you have predominately five iambs in a row, it is called iambic pentameter - Shakespeare's most commonly used pattern. Labeling each syllable as stressed or unstressed is called scanning a line. In poetic scansion, we talk of dividing the line

into "feet." Each "foot" contains the basic rhythm selected by the poet, though he may frequently vary it as he goes. Here are five kinds of frequently used metric feet:

Iamb - an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: u /

Trochee - a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable: / u

Dactyl - a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables: / u u

Anapest - two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable: u u /

Spondee - two equal stresses: u u

It might be fun to post examples of poems that generally follow each of the metric patterns listed above. Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook* gives many examples. Here is a famous line that begins in dactylic meter: "Híckory díckory dóck." Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" is a nice example of a poem in anapestic meter: "For the móon never béams without brínging me dreams/Of the béautiful Annabel Lée." Shakespeare chooses the trochee for his witches in this couplet from *Macbeth*: "Dóuble, dóuble, tóil and tróuble;/ Fíre, búrn; and cáuldron búbble." Ms. Oliver cites the first foot of this line from the opening line of a sonnet by Keats as an example of spondee: "Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art." As she rightly tells us, however, this is not the only possible reading of the line. It is also possible to read the line with stresses on "I", "stead," "as," and "art." However, the first two words remains a good example of a spondee.

Students may ask, "Why does this matter? Who cares if one syllable or another is stressed? What difference does it make if one line rhymes and another doesn't?" Scanning Shakespeare's sonnets can reveal particular meanings and emphases, particularly when there is a variation. For instance, here is the opening line of sonnet 66: "Tíred with álI these, for réstful déath I cry." The first word begins with a stressed syllable, breaking the usual pattern. It is always a good idea to ask the question, "Why did Shakespeare change the pattern in this case? What did he want to say by drawing our attention to the pattern here?" Perhaps we are supposed to feel how truly tired the speaker of this line is, so tired that he cries out for death as a respite.

Occasionally we find sonnets that end with an unstressed syllable, as in the following line that begins sonnet 8: "Músic to heár, why heár'st thou músic sadly." Lines that end with an unstressed syllable are said to have a feminine ending. This extra syllable is no accident. We must ask ourselves, "What effect does this rhythm have on us? What was Shakespeare hoping to accomplish? How does the rhythm reflect the meaning of the line or entire sonnet?" Edmondson and Wells propose a purpose:

The bitter-sweet proposition of the opening line and the adverb 'sadly' make the line longer by one syllable, prolonging a pervasive feeling of melancholy. The metre places stress on the repeated 'music' and the verb 'to hear'. It is as if the lover's initial response to the music might have been different before the effect arrived at the end of the line.²²

Strategies

I have grouped Shakespeare's sonnets thematically. The sonnets discussed in this unit can easily be found online, or in other resources cited near the end of this unit. I present here what I have discovered, with the help of Shakespeare scholars. Students will not be expected to replicate the information below, but I have included a discussion of several sonnets so that any teacher using this unit, including myself, will be better prepared to guide them as they work. It is my hope that the more thoroughly explicated sonnets will serve as a model for the others. In a similar fashion, I will model an explication of one or two sonnets, and then expect my students to follow my lead and analyze several sonnets on their own. I also want students to look at connections and contradictions between the sonnets in their group. Just what is the poet saying about that subject? Is he saying one thing or many different things?

Attitudes Toward Love and Lust

One group will be assigned the theme of attitudes toward love and lust in Shakespeare's sonnets. They will be asked to study sonnets 4, 21, 130, 129, and 116 as representative of different views Shakespeare gives us on this subject.

What does Shakespeare say about love? And what about lust? Do the sonnets on these subjects complement each other, or do we instead find contradictions? Petrarch's sonnets were usually about love, so it would be natural for Shakespeare to follow suit, at least some of the time, given that the English sonnet was derived from the Italian. To say that Shakespeare wrote love poems, however, would be an oversimplification. Like the characters in Shakespeare's plays, the sonnets defy simple categorization. According to John Blades, "Practically all of the sonnets are concerned with love in some of its polymorphic aspects and, by the same measure, each sonnet is concerned with many other things besides love, including themes of time and art, gender attitudes, courtly ideals of love, notions of fidelity and deception, and so on."²³ The goal here is not to label some sonnets love poems, or others as being about deception. Rather, the goal is to look at evidence from various sonnets that include a multitude of themes to glean a hint or two about the complexity of viewpoint in the poem.

The first seventeen of Shakespeare's sonnets are addressed to a young man, urging him not to be selfish with his wonderful qualities, but to marry and produce offspring. Sonnet 4 is one example. Here is the rhymed couplet at the end of the sonnet: "Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,/ Which, used, lives th' executor to be."

The diction, or word choice, is worthy of investigation. Here we find that Shakespeare has used a multitude of economic terms to deliver his message. These include unthrifty, spend, bequest, lend, largess, profitless, usurer, sum, audit - at least nine such terms in a mere fourteen lines. David West says of this large number of economic references, "Shakespeare himself was a man of property, and took to the law courts on occasion. He exploited the poetic possibilities in the language of finance in several other sonnets, notably in 67, 74, 87, 134 and 146."²⁴ These terms suggest that the young man is holding back his "loveliness." Nature has not given, or "bequeathed" his charms, but "doth lend" them so that they may be passed on to the next generation. Then, in a rather harsh tone, Shakespeare refers to the young man as a "beauteous niggard" who "[doth] abuse" his gift. He is a "profitless usurer," another derogatory label, making him even worse than the despised Jewish usurer of the day, because he is profitless. This "sweet self [doth] deceive" himself by indulging in "traffic with thyself alone." He is not sharing his wealth, but is self-indulgent by remaining single. The final couplet explains

that the sad result would be that his "unused beauty" would be buried, or "tomed with thee."

When describing one's love, honesty is better than overblown flattery. Shakespeare makes this clear in two sonnets that satirize what he saw as foolish love poetry. The most famous of these is Sonnet 130, discussed earlier in this unit. The form of Sonnet 130 emphasizes its meaning. Very few lines in the first two quatrains follow an easy rhythm. Line 2 begins with an inverted iamb and continues to be irregular in the second part of the line. The meter of line two reinforces the satiric nature of this sonnet if we read the last three words with an emphasis on "her" and "red." The pauses in lines 3 and 4 break up the smoothness of the rhythm, and "wires" and "black," which follow one another, are both accented, accomplishing the same thing as the accent on "her." When we come to quatrain three, we find a much simpler, easy rhythmic flow. It is here where the poet speaks the truth about his beloved. The simpler form of the poem mirrors the plain-spoken message.

Sonnet 21 also pokes fun at the typical love sonnet:

So is it not with me as with that Muse, Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,
Who heaven itself for ornament doth use, And every fair with his fair doth
rehearse, Making a couplement of proud compare With sun and moon, with earth and
sea's rich gems, With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare That heaven's
air in this huge rondure hems.

O! let me, true in love, but truly write, And then believe me, my love is as fair
As any mother's child, though not so bright As those gold candles fixed in heaven's
air. Let them say more that like of hearsay well, I will not praise that purpose
not to sell.

As in Sonnet 130, the form of the sonnet underscores the meaning. The meter in line 4 adds a mocking tone, with its accent on the second "fair."²⁵ Likewise, the meter in line 10 is used to make a point, emphasizing "my love." The opening octave is full of difficult, obscure words rarely used, even by Shakespeare himself: words such as "rondure" in line 8 and "couplement" in line 5. The vocabulary changes in the sestet. It becomes simpler, easier to understand, and words of mostly one syllable. This reflects the plainer meaning in description and more true, not overplaying the message or the way it is delivered.

In Sonnet 129, we get a poem dedicated to the subject of lust. I have shown the sonnet here as one long stanza of 12 lines. I think it would be worthy of study by my students to consider the reason for this. There is no turn in the customary sense, but instead we get a passion that goes on line after line after line. Sonnet 129 contains no reference whatsoever to love, or for that matter, no caring of any kind. Once again, we can see how Shakespeare reinforces his meaning using the form of the sonnet. In line 2 we find a repetition of words, but in a new order, "where the very order of the words reverses the order of the experience."²⁶ "Bloody, full of blame" is made sharper by the alliteration. The meter of lines 3 and 4 forces us to stop over and over. Nearly every word forces a strong accent, and an emphasis. There is no easy flow of iambic pentameter, but a halting read "and the jolt is all the crueller for the assonance of "rude" and "cruel."²⁷

In several lines we find a hunting metaphor where "a lustful human being is like an animal taking a bait."²⁸ "'Hunted' brilliantly fixes on the almost manic intensity of the pursuit."²⁹ An anaphora, the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of successive lines or sentences, is used twice within these fourteen lines of sonnet 129. In lines 6 and 7, two words, "past reason," are repeated, which "sketches out the intense grip of [the poet's] fixation."³⁰ The experience of passion, according to this sonnet, is not one that leads to calm, logical,

straightforward thinking. One in lust has lost his sanity. He becomes "mad in pursuit," and remains mad even "in possession" of that which he pursues. Once having accomplished his "quest," it merely is "proved a very woe." Lust is so enticing, enjoyable, even blissful, that despite knowing full well, as "all the world knows well knows," none know how "to shun the heaven that leads men to this hell." Man's ambivalence toward lust, something that is "enjoyed," even though it is immediately "despised" afterward, is evident throughout the sonnet. In line 11, we hear of "bliss" that is "a very woe," and the contrast between heaven and hell at the end. This ambivalence is also demonstrated in the frequent pauses in the middle of the line (seven of the fourteen), often with an alteration in feeling from one end to the other. Lust feels too good to forgo, even as it brings one to a state of self-loathing, and the lines cut in half help show that.

Sonnet 116 is the antithesis of Sonnet 129, and the two would make an excellent pairing for my students. It is the most commonly quoted sonnet in illustration of Shakespeare's attitude towards true love, and so idealizes the idea that it is often read at weddings. Shakespeare couldn't be further from the subject of lust than he is in this sonnet, where we do not find the physical self at all, but the "marriage of true minds." The "unstable convulsion of desire in [sonnet 129] is contrasted with the more tranquil steadfastness of love in sonnet 116."³¹ Sonnet 116 differs from sonnet 129 not only in message but in construction as well. John Blades explains: "While the first quatrain opens with abstract nouns the second now switches to concrete, conveying a sense of durability."³² Love is personified in line 6, where love "looks on tempests and is never shaken." Love "looks on" as if to say that it watches tempests without being part of them. Love can stand back and just observe, unswerving, unmoving, and steadfast. The two metaphors echo this theme. Love is compared to an "ever-fixed mark" and a "star."

The meter can be analyzed to support the theme. Line one, "Lét me nótt to the márrriage of trúe mínds," forces us to emphasize trúe mínds - as opposed to the false ones. Sonnet 116 begins with a stress on not, which is also emphasized by the meter in lines 9, "Love's nótt Time's fóol, though rósy líps and chéeks," and 11, "Lóve alters nótt with his bríef hóurs and weéks." We learn first what love is not, followed by two examples of what love is, and then two more of what love is not, providing a balanced, calm structure. Stability and unity are added by repeating "alters" in line 11, after it was used twice in line 3.

The Power of Love to Change Reality

Another group will be assigned the theme of the power of love in Shakespeare's sonnets - a power so great that that it can change our perception of reality. They will be asked to study five sonnets from among 5, 27, 29, 30, 33, 73, 57, and 64 as representative of different views Shakespeare gives us on this subject. Here I will offer an analysis of two sonnets from this group to demonstrate the type of information I am hoping my students will be able to recognize.

Sonnet 73 also has a love theme, but what stands out far and above any mention of love is the reference to the effects of time's passing: aging and eventual death. Shakespeare uses three metaphors to describe aging, one per quatrain. Quatrain 1 compares the poet's old age to the autumn of the year, the time of "yellow leaves." David West discusses the pace and the order of the second line, saying, "The choppy order makes the line sound like a man brooding, and correcting himself..."³³ It also might be interesting to my students to understand that "bare ruined choirs" refers to the oft sighted remains of Catholic churches that dotted England's landscape in Shakespeare's day - so many were destroyed during the reign of Henry VIII.

Quatrain 2 refers to the parts of the day as its extended metaphor, and old age is the "twilight of [the] day." Night is "Death's second self," both shutting out the daylight. Quatrain 3 begins with the same opening as the

second quatrain, but now has a fire metaphor. The fire "consumes" the wood that feeds it, just as time is "consumed" as we age. As depressing as these twelve lines might be - when all is rushing toward an end, whether seasons, a day, or a fire (the speed increases with each quatrain) - they just serve to strengthen the power of the final couplet once the turn arrives in line 13. This mimics the strengthening of one's love toward another, made that much more powerful and precious once the end is in sight.

Sonnet 29 is an interesting contrast to sonnet 73 because of the similarity in subject matter, but with a different placement of the turn. Quatrain 1 gives us a litany of the poet's miserable existence. Others disapprove of him, maybe even despise him, for after all he is in disgrace. Even Fortune is against him, and not just ordinary fortune, but all-encompassing Fortune with a capital letter, as one would capitalize the name of a god. When going through this, the speaker is "all alone" and "outcast." The aloneness is strengthened by the meter, where three out of four syllables are emphasized, reading, "Í áll alóne." Even Heaven, also capitalized, is deaf to his condition. The placement of the stress reinforces this. Line 3 says, "And tróuble déaf Héaven" with the unusual two stressed syllables in a row, where the poet really goes out of his way to have us stress the words "deaf" and "Heaven." Also, West asks, "Does this lurch in the metre suggest despair?"³⁴

In sonnet 29, we find an individual in a state of misery and self-pity. Line 4 tells us that he is looking upon himself and cursing his fate. This is followed by as many as ten self-referential terms, including I, myself, me, and my. This is a man contemplating his own navel! Quatrain 2 conveys ways in which the speaker is filled with envy. He wishes to be like someone "more rich in hope," to look like one, to have the friends of another, to write as well as still another, and wanting "that man's scope." Has any aspect of life been omitted? West believes, "The flavour of an endless list of complaints is heightened by the monotony of the metre."³⁵ I see particular emphasis on "him," repeated twice in line 6, but also stressed each time. In line 7, "this" and "that" are accented, reinforcing the distance from himself of what he desires.

Following the most downcast lines of all, crossing from lines 8 to 9 in the third quatrain, we get to the point where the poet admits he "almost" despises himself. The turn of sonnet 29 comes at the start of line 10, with the powerful "Haply." Now, the "I" is no longer receiving the stress, but rather the next word "think" and then "thee." The line reads, "Heply I think on thee..." Line 10 reads, "Líke to the lárk at bréak of dáy arísing." Here is the sort of analysis I would love my students to understand:

The trochaic first foot gives an energetic snap to the line (reinforced as well by the shared /'s and k's of "like" and "lark") appropriate for the early morning upward soar of Shakespeare's emblematic bird. How do our ears respond when this substitution is made? For one thing, we hear a strong stress in the first syllable where the meter makes us expect a weak stress only. This surprise gives the line a strong inauguration rhythm that focuses special attention on the opening words — an attention justified by the sense contained in the line. Notice also that putting a trochee before an iamb also results in two consecutive syllables with weaker stress —here, "to" and "the"— a rhythm that cannot occur in a regularly iambic line. This has a speeding up effect, adding a kind of skipping rhythm to the line, which, in this case, vividly corresponds to the darting flight of the bird.³⁶

The Power of Poetry to Bestow Eternal Life

Perhaps in a world where life expectancy was forty, and where smallpox outbreaks regularly killed large portions of the population, life seemed unusually precious, and beauty especially fleeting. Those who miraculously survived smallpox were left horribly scarred, including Queen Elizabeth herself. In such an

atmosphere, Shakespeare's preoccupation with time is understandable — but Shakespeare had a solution. In his sonnets, poetry can do amazing things. It can conquer death by keeping the memory of the beloved alive for eternity. Sonnet 18 tells us that the poet's "eternal summer shall not fade" because "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." Sonnet 19 concludes by telling us that "My love shall in my verse ever live young." Sonnet 55, like sonnet 18, refers to "this" instead of directly naming it as verse, and concludes: "You live in this and dwell in lover's eyes." In sonnet 60, Shakespeare did not ignore the reference of the sonnet number to the sixty minutes of an hour, and he talks of "our minutes hasten[ing] to their end." Yet once again, he says, "My verse shall stand." After discussing the "lines and wrinkles" of old age in line 4 of sonnet 63, "His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,/And they shall live, and he in them still green" is the final sentiment. Sonnet 65 talks not of "black lines," but of "black ink" in which "my love may still shine bright." Sonnet 81 begins with a reference to "your epitaph" and ends with "You still shall live, such virtue hath my pen, /Where breath most breathes, ev'n in the mouths of men."

Sonnets 18, 19, 55, 60, 63, 65, and 81, therefore, will be the focus for the group researching this theme. Sonnet 18 and 19 are a good pairing, and could even be extended to include sonnet 17, for a study of the sonnets as they relate to one another. There is much scholarly work concerning the 154 Shakespearean sonnets as a coherent whole. It can be said that when read one after the other, they in fact tell a story. This interconnection goes beyond the content to the structure. Edmondson and Wells make much of the fact that the rhymed couplet of one sonnet has an emotional and logical connection to the first line of the next sonnet. The ending of sonnet 18 seems to lead directly to the opening of sonnet 19, a pattern often followed by Shakespeare, and worth having my students note. The last line of sonnet 18, quoted above, refers to the power of poetry to give life to the poet's love, where "this" is the poem itself. The first line of sonnet 19 picks up from there with the theme of the power of time: "Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws."

Time's Eternal March

One of the more common themes in Shakespeare's sonnets concerns time's never-ending passage. Some of the messages about time include: Human reproduction and poetry are our only weapons against time's eternal march. Time does many bad things. It steals our beauty, and it takes away our loved ones. Time, like an accountant, is constantly counting down toward the destruction of us, of beauty, and of our monuments. Time runs out quickly, and we had better take heed! Time treats all equally, the common man and the king. Poetry can be controlled, but not Time! We are powerless in the face of Time.

In the first 17 sonnets dedicated to the young man, Shakespeare seems obsessed with time. The young man "has much to lose" with the passing of time. Shakespeare had been a fan of the poet Ovid, and Shakespeare's take on the effects of time mimics Ovid's own views, where "the shifts and change that occur over the course of time bring about decay, death, and, ultimately the disintegration of form that is the fate of all organic matter. The changes Ovid describes invariably involve a diminished rather than enhanced human identity."³⁷

I plan on recommending Sonnets 2, 3, 6, 12, 15, and 64 to the group studying this theme. Again, I offer a consecutive pair of sonnets in the list in hopes that they may see a sort of continuation from one to the other. However, many of the sonnets connected with the previous theme, such as 19, would be good fodder for them as well, and I will offer them the option of considering additional sonnets. In sonnet 19, for instance, we find several wonderful metaphors for the power of time, with time so powerful that it can "blunt the lion's paw," "pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws," and more.

Five sonnets in this group come from those first 17 sonnets, sometimes called Shakespeare's procreation

sonnets. Sonnet 15 "continues the theme begun in sonnet 1: the danger to the young man of passing time. Fearing the effects of time on the young man, whose 'days of youth' will last only so long, Shakespeare finds himself again 'at war with time' because of his love for him ('for love of you')."38

The study of sonnets 2 and 3 as a pair would be useful. The octave of sonnet 2 is full of images of old age, such as "deep trenches in thy beauty's field" to describe wrinkles on the brow. The sestet offers the solution: a child who would be "new made when thou art old." Sonnet 3 continues where sonnet 2 concludes. According to Edmondson and Wells, "This sonnet begins with a command which controls not only the lover, but the reader of the sonnet as well"39: "Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest." Sonnet 3 complicates the simpler message of sonnet 2, introducing the mother of the recommended offspring. Students can study these sonnets side by side, commenting on how one continues the theme of the other, but also further complicates it.

As I have stated before, the discussion of sonnets given so far in this unit is by no means exhaustive. I have only given a hint of the direction students can take. The more thorough explications are demonstrated earlier in the unit as examples of what students can look for as they examine each sonnet.

Classroom Activities

Classroom Activity #1

One qualification necessary for a close reading of Shakespeare's sonnets is knowing how to scan a poem. I do not think it is necessary for my students to learn the names of all of the possible configurations of stressed and unstressed syllables. Instead, I plan on giving them just the information found earlier in this unit in the section entitled *Sonnet Notation*.

My students have a difficult time hearing the difference between a stressed and unstressed syllable. I will begin by mentioning that an iamb is like a heartbeat - dah dum, dah dum, dah dum - one of the primary rhythms of life. I will also talk about not only listening for the louder syllable, but also the one that is higher pitched, since these features go together in English. Students like to insist that the accent falls where it does depending on how you say something, and sometimes admittedly it is a subjective decision. However, they would like to say it is always subjective. To counter this argument, I will begin with their names. After all, we say Therésa, not Theresá, no matter what our inflection. We say Rómó, but never Roméo, unless we are talking about the car, the Alfa Roméo. I would give other examples of how silly a name would sound if the accent were moved.

After practicing with many names, starting with the names of the students in my class, we would move on to prose, using lines that students make up. We would scan the line together as a class, and work on making alterations so that the line is changed to iambic pentameter. For instance, let's say we began with the sentence, "Í left schóol in a húrry to dó my hómework." I would ask, "Do you see any way we could add or subtract a syllable to alter the placement of stresses?" I would model making these changes, thinking aloud as I made them. I might say, "The opening two syllables begin stressed and unstressed, so I need to add something so that this changes. If I add the word "the," the pattern changes to "I léft the schóol." I could leave "in a hurry" the way it is because two unstressed syllables in a row kind of sound like someone is in a hurry,

but if I want to change that, it could become "to rúsh." I now have, "I léft the schóol to rúsh to dó my ..." What word could I put there that is just one syllable? I might ask students to help me with that one. Now I would ask students to try to convert a prose sentence into an iambic pentameter line themselves. A volunteer could write their sentence on the board, and together, as a class, we could scan it and make corrections if need be. Next, students would work in pairs to write several more, and write these on the board for the whole class to scan.

A woman only identified as Vicki100 on her blog suggests playing with parts of Shakespeare's sonnets to encourage students to work with meter. I might give the following as examples before assigning this to my students using another sonnet. For example, part of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 2" written originally in iambic pentameter without any rhythmic substitution reads:

When forty wonders shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now,
Will be a tattered weed of small worth held.

Students working with a partner would be assigned to play with this and convert it to iambic trimeter:

When forty winters shall Besiege thy brow
and dig Deep trenches in thy face
Thy youth's proud livery Will be a worthless weed.

The poem could be shifted from iambic to trochaic meter:

Forty winters shall besiege thy lovely Brow
and dig deep trenches in thy beauty's Field
and youth's proud livery loved so fully
Soon will be a tattered weed of little worth.

Before venturing on to the difficult task of analyzing Shakespeare's sonnets, I want my students to try their own hand at writing poems in iambic verse. Each could write about any mundane incident in their daily lives. The assignment would then be to turn this into a four to six line poem of iambic meter, not necessarily pentameter. For instance, here is an example I wrote in iambic tetrameter. It doesn't rhyme, and it isn't very poetic, but it is an example of the sort of thing my students could do easily to practice meter:

I wálked to Shópríte neár my hóuse
To báy some foód to máke my lúnch
I wálked alóng the crówded stréets
Arrívíng there all sét to shóp.
I sáw sardínes and saíd,
"Oh nó!" I'd ráther háve some p and j.

Classroom Activity # 2

The next hurdle is to communicate to my students that the placement of the stressed syllable can underscore the meaning. Because I think they will not find it easy, I will engage them in an exercise or two before we look at the sonnets. I would have them compare lines where the same word is stressed in one, and not in another. The question for each example is: What meaning is conveyed by the placement of the stressed syllable? The word "I" can fall as stressed or unstressed. Shakespeare says, "Haply I think on thee." The "I" is unstressed. "What words are stressed?" I would ask. So what words are most important in that line? What meaning is conveyed by that choice? Compare it to this line from the Bible: "I am the power and I am the glory." What syllables are emphasized here? How does that reflect the meaning? What about in the famous proposition by Ren? Descartes: "I think; therefore I am." I would ask students to think about the answer, share it with their partner, and then share their answer, or their partner's, with the class.

Next I will ask my students, working with the same partner they have been working with in Classroom Activity #1, to try this: Take an ordinary word, such as her, and see if you can write one line where it is stressed and another where it is not. I tried to do this myself to see if it was possible. I came up with these examples: Her háir is sílky and shiny; I lóve her líps so réd; Red líps on h&eacu;ter are gross. I could put these on the board and ask students to discuss the results of the different emphases. In each line, what meaning do we get as a result of the placement of the stress? We could try various words. Each pair of students would place their examples on the board for the class to discuss. The focus of the discussion would be, how does the placement of the word in the line, and its stress, alter the meaning?

Now I would begin to have my students examine some of Shakespeare's sonnets. For instance, we would look at lines like the opening line of sonnet 66 again: "Tíred with áll these, for réstful déath I cry." The emphasis on tired at the start of the line makes me feel tired as I read it. I want them to understand that this is a direct result of inverting the iamb at the start of the line. I would first ask them if they could see the difference in emotional impact between, "I am tíred," and "Tíred I am." We would compare it to a line where tired is in the line and not receiving such as emphasis: "Í was tíred áll the tíme." I am hoping they will see the difference, which, while slight, is important. Line 10 in sonnet 29, "Líke to the lárk at bréak of dáy arísing," is the next example I would offer to demonstrate how the careful placement of a stress can support the intended meaning. An explanation of how this is so is offered earlier in the unit where I discuss sonnet 29. Even just looking at the word arísing helps demonstrate where meaning meets stress placement.

I will ask my students to scan the second line of sonnet 18: "Córal is fár more réd than her líps' red." Now scan the last two lines of the same sonnet, I would say: "I love to hear her speak, yet well I know/That music hath a far more pleasing sound." What difference do you see in the rhythmic pattern of these lines? Does one seem choppy than the other? Does one flow more smoothly? What reasons can you imagine for the poet designing these lines differently? Again, so that more than a few students get to think about this before someone blurts out an answer, I will have students think about the answer on their own, share with a partner, and then share with the class.

Now we would talk about the difference in stanza organization, comparing a Shakespearean sonnet with an octave and a sestet with others using three quatrains and a rhymed couplet. The examples I would use are found earlier in this unit. I would ask students to compare the Shakespearean form found in sonnets 30 and 34 with the Petrarchan form used in sonnet 12. My hope is that students would now be ready to tackle an examination of some of Shakespeare's sonnets on their own, with the assistance of classmates.

Classroom Activity # 3

Students will be divided into groups of four or five, and assigned one of the themes discussed in this curriculum unit. They include: *Love or Lust*, *The Power of Love to Change Reality*, *The Power of Poetry to Bestow Eternal Life*, and *Time's Eternal March*.

Each group will be asked to prepare a power point presentation to the class in which they explain the meaning of each sonnet assigned to their group, and ways in which Shakespeare has used the form of the sonnet to reflect the meaning. While studying their assigned sonnets, students can use these questions to begin:

1. Where do you see repetition of words or phrases? Do you see examples of anaphora or other repetition of words? Are any thoughts or ideas being emphasized by those repetitions?
2. Scan the meter of the sonnet and look for alterations in the rhythm. Can any meaning be attached to the alteration at that particular moment? Do some lines flow more smoothly in rhythm than others?

What significance can be attached to those differences?

3. Look for examples of alliteration or assonance or consonance. How do these sound patterns reflect the meaning of the sonnet?
4. Look for examples of figurative language: extended metaphors, personification, hyperbole, simile, etc. How do these underscore the meaning of the sonnet? Do they ever seem to complicate the message?
5. Closely examine the diction of the sonnet. Select word choices that stand out to you as particularly odd or interesting. What do you make of those word choices? Do they introduce a tone that fits or contrasts with the overall message?

They can also look at their groups of sonnets and ask themselves these questions:

1. How does one sonnet seem to comment on another in your group?
2. Does one sonnet in any way alter the message of another?
3. How do the various sonnets reinforce the meaning of the others?
4. Do you get the sense that any of these sonnets were intended to be read together as a pair or as a group?
5. In the cases where you have consecutively numbered sonnets, does the ending of one ever appear to begin or continue the next?

Here is a graphic organizer that I will also distribute to assist my students.

Sonnet Number Being Analyzed:

**In this column,
quote a phrase or
line that seems
significant:**

**In this column,
explain how the
meaning of the
sonnet is supported
by your example:**

Meter: Examples of alterations in the meter that have significance.

Alliteration: the repetition of the first consonant of a word.

Assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds example:

Consonance: the repetition of consonants or a consonant pattern not already listed:

Repetition of words or phrases:

Metaphors or Similes:

Examples of Other Forms of Figurative Language:

Resources for the Teacher

Blades, John. *Shakespeare: The Sonnets*. Houndsmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

John Blades gives very particular, thorough, and enlightening explications of a number of sonnets organized by theme.

Booth, Stephen. *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, New Haven, 1969.

While most of Booth's discussions are far too advanced for my students, they may be of interest to the teacher wanting to learn more about the details of the structure of the sonnets.

Callaghan, Dympna. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

I found this text to be invaluable in its discussions of the themes in Shakespeare's sonnets and the particular ways the poet uses techniques of poetry to underscore his meaning.

Corn, Alfred. *The Poem's Heartbeat: A Manual of Prosody*. Brownsville, OR: Story Line Press, 1997.

This is a very basic text on metrical variation, stanza, refrain, and elements of prosody, written simply and clearly.

Edmondson, Paul and Stanley Wells. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

This is a rich resource that clearly explains the history of Shakespeare's sonnets, the impact of the Shakespearean sonnet organization, the subject matter of the sonnets, and much, much more.

Jacobsen, Sarah and Mandy McQuaid. "Shakespeare sonnets 30 and 120 (1609)." *Early Modern Texts Project at Valparaiso University*, 7/13/2001.

http://www.valpo.edu/english/emtexts/sonn20_130print.html (accessed June 11, 2008).

Jokinen, Anniina. "Life of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)." *Luminarium: 16th Century Renaissance English Literature (1485-1603)*, Sept. 24, 2007.

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/sidbio.htm> (accessed June 11, 2008).

Kuin, Roger. "Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)." *The Sidney Homepage*, 03 April 2006.

http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/sidney/sidney_biography.htm (accessed June 11, 2008).

These two sites provide all the information you ever wanted about Sir Philip Sidney.

Mabillard, Amanda. *Shakespeare Online*. 2007.

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets> (accessed 07/11/08).

This site offers all of Shakespeare's sonnets, a line by line translation and analyses.

Marsico, Lynn. "Studying the Sonnet: An Introduction to the Importance of Form in Poetry" *Yale National Initiative*, 2005.

http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/search/viewer.php?id=initiative_05.01.11_u&skin=h (accessed June 11, 2008).

This poetry unit is extremely accessible and useful. It is aimed at the middle school teacher, and would be a good counterpart to this unit.

Matz, Robert. *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008.

Matz includes interesting theories about the history of writing sonnets, and how their writing fits into the cultural history of English society.

Oliver, Mary. *A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994.

You will find lots of examples of poetry in various meters and line lengths.

Sharp, William. "The Sonnet: Its Characteristics and History." *Sonnet Central*, October 27, 2007. <http://www.sonnets.org/sharp-c.htm> (accessed June 11, 2008).

You will find lots of information about sonnet structure and history at this site.

West, David. *Shakespeare's Sonnets with a New Commentary*. London: Duckworth Overlook, 2007.

This is an excellent resource, with each sonnet followed by a good paraphrase and detailed explications.

Notes

1. Marsico, *Yale National Initiative*.
2. Ibid, 12.
3. Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 22.
4. Callaghan, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 15.
5. Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 13.
6. Ibid, 14.
7. Kuin, *The Sydney Homepage*.
8. Callaghan, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 15.
9. Matz, *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction*, 25.
10. Callaghan, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 16.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid, 18.
13. Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 16.
14. Jacobsen and McQuaid, *Early Modern Texts Project at Valparaiso University*.
15. Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 15-16.
16. Booth, *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 15.
17. Matz, *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction*, 55.
18. Booth, *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 16.
19. Ibid.

20. Matz, *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction*, 55.
21. West, *Shakespeare's Sonnets with a New Commentary*, 119.
22. Edmondson and Wells, 59.
23. Blades, *Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, 4.
24. West, *Shakespeare's Sonnets with a New Commentary*, 4.
25. *Ibid.*, 78.
26. West, *Shakespeare's Sonnets with a New Commentary*, 392.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Blades, *Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, 14.
30. *Ibid.*, 14.
31. *Ibid.*, 16.
32. *Ibid.*, 63.
33. West, *Shakespeare's Sonnets with a New Commentary*, 228.
34. *Ibid.*,
35. *Ibid.*, 101.
36. Corn, *The Poem's Heartbeat: A Manual of Prosody*, 40.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Matz, *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction*, 83.
39. Edmondson and Wells, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 65.

Appendix [A]: Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

1.1. Learning to Read Independently

D. Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts

G. Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text,

including public documents

1.2 Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading

1.3. Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

1.4. Types of Writing

1.5. Quality of Writing

1.6. Speaking and Listening

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