

SONNET 18

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE(1564-1616)

- English poet, playwright and actor
- Regarded as the greatest writer in the English language.
- Most important dramatist in the world
- England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon"
- Born in Stratford-upon-Avon
- Son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden
- Educated at the King Edward VI Grammar School at Stratford
- Married to Anne Hathaway
- Started as a small actor and later became a playwright and a producer of plays.
- Major Works: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, As you Like It, Romeo and Juliet



SONNET

- ▶ Short lyric poem of **14 iambic pentameter** (unstressed syllable followed by stressed syllable) lines.
- ▶ Follow a strict rhyme scheme and a specific structure
- ▶ Originated in Italy and the Sicilian poet **Giacomo da Lentini** is credited with its invention.
- ▶ Writers of sonnets are sometimes called as **Sonneteers**.
- ▶ Two major patterns of rhyme in sonnets:

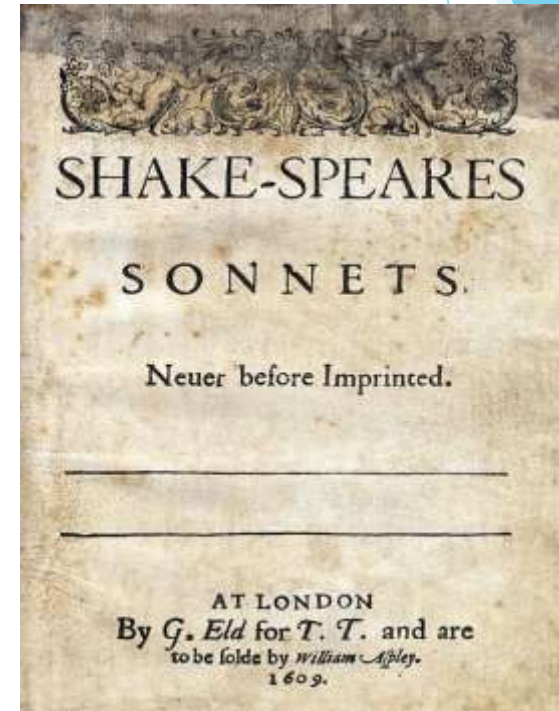
i) **The Italian/the Petrarchan Sonnet**: an octave(8 lines), rhyming: *abab abab*, followed by a sestet(6 lines), rhyming: *cde cde* or *cdc cdc*.

ii) **The English/Shakespearean Sonnet**: 3 quatrains and a couplet, rhyming: *abab cdcd efef gg*.

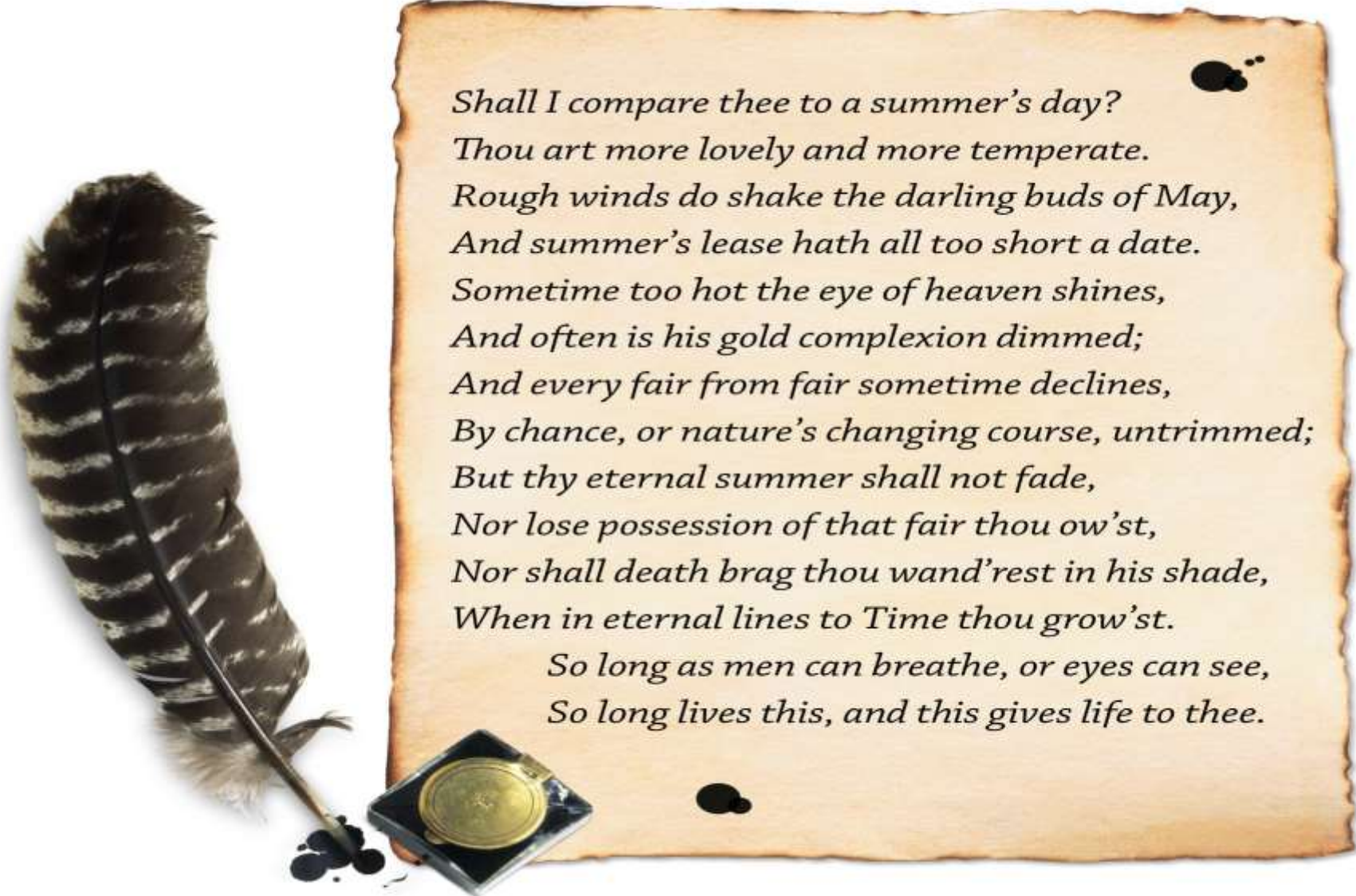
The Spenserian Sonnet: noble variant of the English form. The form is treated as a 3 quatrains connected by the interlocking rhyme scheme and closed by a couplet. The rhyme scheme is *abab bcbc cdcd ee*.

Shakespeare's Sonnets(1609)

- ▶ 154 sonnets:
 - ▶ 1-126: addressed to-anonymous handsome young man (Fair youth)
 - ▶ 127-152: Dark Lady- Mary Fitton
 - ▶ 153-154: Cupid (regular sonnets)
- ▶ Published by Thomas Thorpe and dedicated to W.H.
- ▶ Francis Meres in his book **Palladis Tamia** referred these sonnets as “Sugered Sonnets.”
- ▶ **Themes** : love, passion, beauty, time, infidelity, jealousy and mortality.



Sonnet 18



*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

SONNET 18 (Paraphrase)

Shall I compare you to a summer's day?
You are more lovely and more constant:
Rough winds shake the beloved buds of May
And summer is far too short:
At times the sun is too hot,
Or often goes behind the clouds;
And everything beautiful sometime will lose its beauty,
By misfortune or by nature's planned out course.
But your youth shall not fade,
Nor will you lose the beauty that you possess;
Nor will death claim you for his own,
Because in my eternal verse you will live forever.
So long as there are people on this earth,
So long will this poem live on, making you immortal.

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day

- ▶ Addressed to a fair young man. (Fair Youth)
- ▶ Falls under Fair Youth Sequence.
- ▶ The poet is in search of a metaphor to compare his beloved's beauty.
- ▶ He asks if he shall compare him to a summer's day
- ▶ But he says, the young man has qualities that can even surpass a summer day
- ▶ The summer day shall gradually change and diminish
- ▶ But the young man's beauty shall live forever in his sonnets, as long as people could read and write.
- ▶ Focus on friendship
- ▶ Tries to capture the beauty of his beloved with help of his poetry
- ▶ Though it is not stated directly, it is a love poem.

1st Quartrain

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date;

- Asking a rhetorical question, “Should I compare you to a summer’s day?”
- The youth’s beauty is more gentle, calm, mild and restrained than the beauty of a summer day.
- Temperate: i)externally a climate(mild temperature) and ii)internally a balance of 4 humors.
(A judicious balance of these humors that determines the very existence of human beings.)
- Strong winds shake the beautiful, much loved buds of the early summer.(end of spring)
- Winds -too rough.

- ▶ Summer has a deadline which is too short & temporary- to make way for other seasons.
- ▶ Has taken lease on season cycle- summer(lessee) has only a short rented space and time in the great seasonal cycle(lessor).
- ▶ Personification-human quality ascribed to summer
- ▶ So here the metaphor of summers day fails to capture his beloved's beauty

2nd Quartrain

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

- Personifies the sun-regarded as the eye of heaven.
- Sometimes it is too hot.
- Sometimes its not visible especially on cloudy days
- Gives it a gold complexion. His object of comparison, which is considered as the radiant and the brightest object in the universe is subject to change. So, sun is also not an apt metaphor.
- Sun is also used as a strong Renaissance symbol for beauty. -LOVE POETRY

- ▶ All beautiful things become inferior in comparison with their essential previous state of beauty(Change happens),by chance or by the changing course of the nature without ornaments.
- ▶ Core of the speaker's philosophy.
- ▶ Speaker declares that everything beautiful shall eventually fade away.
- ▶ It doesn't have a permanent charm to its credit.
- ▶ Beautiful things lose their trimmings(decoration) at a particular point of time for it is Nature's Law.
- ▶ Nature's natural change remains unchanged.(The only thing that remains unchanged is change.)-Oxymoron

- ▶ Diacope-Repitition of a word or phrase with one or more words in between.
 “And every fair from fair sometimes decline”

3rd Quartrain

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:

- Speaker says that all objects of nature are subject to change and decay.
- But your eternal summer shall not die. It is immortal.
- Nor shall it lose its hold on that beauty which you so richly possess.
- Ow'st: i) owe - synonym of 'own' - owner of eternal beauty, possession
ii) owe - beauty is borrowed from nature, it should be paid back

Thus the word 'fair' can also mean a 'fare' or tax which humans should pay Nature for continuing life's journey.

The themes of borrowing and lending are very common in Shakespeare's works.

- ▶ Speaker says that death shall not claim his beloved in the dark desolate valleys of death(Psalm 23:4,Biblical Allusion),for his beloved is immortal
- ▶ I'm going to make him immortal.
- ▶ And you will never die as you will live on my enduring poetry.
- ▶ Art is immortal.
- ▶ So it can immortalize mortals
- ▶ death is personified in line 11.

Couplet

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

- Shatters all the metaphors used so far to represent his beloved's beauty.
- It is the poet's own poetry that makes his beloved immortal in the hearts of the readers. (the best metaphor)
- As long as people live and breathe, as long as eyes can see it-that is how long these verses will live, celebrating you, and continually renewing your life.