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A glass inkwell filled with dark ink sits on a piece of parchment. A quill pen with a gold-colored ferrule and nib lies diagonally across the parchment. The parchment is covered in handwritten text in a cursive script. The word 'SONNETS' is written in large, bold, black, hand-painted letters across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the quill and the parchment text. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light brown.

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Sonnets Background

- A sonnet is a one-stanza, 14-line poem, written in **iambic pentameter**.
- All sonnets must have a strict rhyme scheme.
- Before William Shakespeare's day, the word sonnet could be applied to any short lyric poem because the name is taken from the Italian word *sonetto*, which means "a little sound or song."
- Different types of sonnets evolved in the different languages of the poets writing them, with variations in rhyme scheme and metrical pattern.
- All sonnets have a **two-part thematic structure**, containing either: a problem and solution, question and answer, or proposition and reinterpretation.
- The turn between the two parts where the tone or argument shifts in a sonnet is called the **volta**.



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Iambic Pentameter

- An iamb is one single foot or beat. Penta means five.
- For any poem written in iambic pentameter, each line has five sets of two beats, the first is unstressed and the second is stressed. Each line will have 10 syllables in total.
- The sound of unstressed and stressed syllables put together is most often associated with a heartbeat. da**DUM** da**DUM**
- Example (Lines 9-10 from Shakespeare's Sonnet 130):
I **love** to **hear** her **speak**, yet **well** I **know**
That **MU**sic **hath** a **far** more **plea**sing **sound**;

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4 Types of Sonnets

- **Shakespearean** (or English sonnets): Named After William Shakespeare, here, three quatrains and a couplet follow this rhyme scheme: **abab cdcd efef gg**. The couplet plays an important role arriving in the form of a conclusion. (Typically the volta occurs in the last two lines.)
- **Petrarchan** (or Italian sonnets): This sonnet type is named after a poet named Francesco Petrarca (aka Petrarch). The Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two stanzas, the octave (the first eight lines) followed by the answering sestet (the final six lines). The rhyme scheme is as follows: **abba, abba, cdecde or cdcdcd** and the themes focus on love or heartbreak. (Typically the volta occurs after the octave.)
- **Spenserian** sonnets: Invented by sixteenth century English poet Edmund Spenser, a Spenserian sonnet is a variation on the Shakespearean sonnet, with a more challenging rhyme scheme: **abab bcbe cdcd ee**.
- **Miltonic** sonnets: Invented by John Milton, these sonnets consist of an octave and a sestet just like the Petrarchan, but they often examine conflicts with one self and internal struggles.

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Sonnet 130

- Look at the example Shakespearean Sonnet!
- Notice all of the details and structure of this poem:
 - Rhyme Scheme
 - Iambic Pentameter
 - Two-Part Theme

Sonnet 130 by William Shakespeare

A My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
B Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
A If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
B If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
C I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
D But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
C And in some perfumes is there more delight
D Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
E I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
F That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
E I grant I never saw a goddess go;
F My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
G And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
G As any she belied with false compare.

First Quatrain:
He describes his mistress's physical appearance as imperfect.

Second Quatrain:
He continues to say his mistress does not have the appeal that a traditional beautiful woman has.

Third Quatrain:
The mistress is nothing special as far as her voice or the way she moves.

Final Couplet:
The VOLTA: because the speaker does not dote on the mistress's physical beauty, his love is more pure. She might not be a Goddess, but she is real and she is unique. He does not need to falsify details about how she looks to prove that she is beautiful.

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Sonnet Analysis

- Read Sonnet 138 by William Shakespeare.
- Answer the questions that follow.



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Write your own Shakespearean Sonnet

You will write a poem with 14 lines. Each line needs to contain 10 syllables in iambic pentameter!

Before writing your poem, brainstorm topics that can be organized into one of the following structures: problem and solution, question and answer, or proposition and reinterpretation.

- **1st quatrain:** This should establish the subject of the sonnet. Four lines in the rhyme scheme: ABAB
- **2nd quatrain:** This should develop the sonnet's theme. Four lines in the rhyme scheme: CDCD
- **3rd quatrain:** This should round off the sonnet's theme. Four lines in the rhyme scheme: EFEF
- **Ending couplet:** This should act as a conclusion to the sonnet. It should be the answer to the problem or some kind of epiphany. Two lines in the rhyme scheme: GG

Name:

Date:

Sonnet Notes

What is a sonnet?

- All sonnets must have a strict rhyme scheme.
- Before William Shakespeare's day, the word sonnet could be applied to any short lyric poem because the name is taken from the Italian word sonetto, which means "a little sound or song."
- Different types of sonnets evolved in the different languages of the poets writing them, with variations in rhyme scheme and metrical pattern.
- All sonnets have a two-part thematic structure, containing either: a problem and solution, question and answer, or proposition and reinterpretation.
- The turn between the two parts where the tone or argument shifts in a sonnet is called the _____.

What is iambic pentameter?

- The sound of unstressed and stressed syllables put together is most often associated with the sound of a heartbeat = daDUM daDUM.
- For Example (Lines 9-10 from Shakespeare's Sonnet 130):

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That Music hath a far more plea sing sound;

4 Types of Sonnets

	(or English sonnets): Named After William Shakespeare, here, three quatrains and a couplet follow this rhyme scheme: abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The couplet plays a pivotal role (the volta), arriving in the form of a conclusion.
	(or Italian sonnets): This sonnet type is named after a poet named Francesco Petrarca (aka Petrarch). The Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two stanzas, the octave (the first eight lines) followed by the answering sestet (the final six lines). The rhyme scheme is as follows: abba, abba, cdecde or cdcded and the themes focus on love or heartbreak. The volta comes after the 8th line.
	Invented by sixteenth century English poet Edmund Spenser, a Spenserian sonnet is a variation on the Shakespearean sonnet, with a more challenging rhyme scheme: ABAB BCBC CDCD EE.
	Invented by John Milton, these sonnets consist of an octave and a sestet just like the Petrarchan, but they often examine conflicts with one self and internal struggles.

Sonnet 130 by William Shakespeare

A My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

B Coral is far more red than her lips' red;

A If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

B If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

First Quatrain:
He describes his mistress's physical appearance as imperfect.

C I have seen roses damasked, red and white,

D But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

C And in some perfumes is there more delight

D Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

Second Quatrain:
He continues to say his mistress does not have the appeal that a traditional beautiful woman has.

E I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

F That music hath a far more pleasing sound;

E I grant I never saw a goddess go;

F My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

Third Quatrain:
The mistress is nothing special as far as her voice or the way she moves.

G And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare

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Final Couplet:
The VOLTA: because the speaker does not dote on the mistress's physical beauty, his love is more pure. She might not be a Goddess, but she is real and she is unique. He does not need to falsify details about how she looks to prove that she is beautiful.

Name:

Date:

Poetry Analysis

Sonnet 138 by William Shakespeare

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
Oh, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.



1. What is the meaning of untutored youth as it is used in the poem?

2. Define unjust as it is used in the poem.

3. What qualities make this poem a traditional Shakespearian Sonnet?

4. Who are the characters in this poem? What is their relationship like?

5. Find one example of alliteration in the poem.

6. What does the following line tell you about the speaker? “My days are past the best.”

7. What is the meaning of the phrase “false-speaking tongue”?

8. What paradox is presented in this poem?

9. Which lines represent the *volta* in this poem? What “shift” takes place?

10. What is the meaning of the final couplet? Why do the lovers allow each other to lie?

11. Do you agree with the following statement? “Love’s best habit is in seeming trust.”

12. Is it always best to tell the truth? Why or why not?

Write your own Shakespearean Sonnet

You will write a poem with 14 lines. Each line needs to contain 10 syllables in iambic pentameter! Before writing your poem, brainstorm topics that can be organized into one of the following structures: problem and solution, question and answer, or proposition and reinterpretation.

First Quatrain	This should establish the subject of the sonnet. Four lines in the rhyme scheme: ABAB
Second Quatrain	This should develop the sonnet's theme. Four lines in the rhyme scheme: CDCD
Third Quatrain	This should round off the sonnet's theme. Four lines in the rhyme scheme: EFEF
Ending Couplet	This should act as a conclusion to the sonnet. It should be the answer to the problem or some kind of epiphany. Two lines in the rhyme scheme: GG

Write your rough draft below. Remember, the structure will take some time to get right. There will be a lot of erasing and crossing out. Take time to brainstorm ideas before writing. Trial and error is your friend! Once you are done with your rough draft, you will write a final draft.

Final draft: neatly write your poem in pen or marker (or typed) on a blank 8.5 x 11 piece of paper. The final copy of your sonnet should include a title.

Final Checklist:

- _____ My poem is 14 lines in length.
- _____ My poem follows the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG
- _____ My poem is in iambic pentameter. Each line is 10 syllables, each beat switching from unstressed to stressed.
- _____ My poem has a clear theme.
- _____ My poem has a volta and conclusion.
- _____ My poem has a title.

Rough Draft Sonnet

1 _____ A

2 _____ B

3 _____ A

4 _____ B

5 _____ C

6 _____ D

7 _____ C

8 _____ D

9 _____ E

10 _____ F

11 _____ E

12 _____ F

13 _____ G

14 _____ G

Poetry Analysis Answer Key

Sonnet 138 by William Shakespeare

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
Oh, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

1. What is the meaning of untutored youth as it is used in the poem?

In the poem, the speaker means naive when he says untutored youth. He is implying that his mistress "believes" he is unaware that she is lying, because he is too "young" and gullible, when in fact he is well aware of her lies. She pretends that he is ignorant of all the deceit that exists in the world.

2. Define unjust as it is used in the poem.

Unjust in the poem means not behaving according to what is morally right; in this case, unjust is synonymous with unfaithful.

3. What qualities make this poem a traditional Shakespearian Sonnet?

It contains fourteen lines that are divided into three sets of quatrains and a final two-line couplet. They rhyme ABAB CDCDEFEFGG. The poem is also written in iambic pentameter.

4. Who are the characters in this poem? What is their relationship like?

The poem seems to be about the speaker and a woman who he is romantically involved with. Though it does not say it in this poem, Shakespeare's Sonnets 127–152 are written about a mistress. Without their lies, their relationship (whatever it might be) would fall apart. It is disingenuous, but also generous. Yes, they lie to each other, but they are aware of each other's lies, and allow each other to live the fantasy they desire.

5. Find one example of alliteration in the poem.

**Examples:
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.**

6. What does the following line tell you about the speaker? “My days are past the best.”

His best days are behind him, meaning he is past his peak of youth and vibrance. This line lets readers know the speaker is old (at least much older than he pretends to be).

7. What is the meaning of the phrase “false-speaking tongue”?

False-speaking tongue describes the lies or untruths she tells the speaker.

8. What paradox is presented in this poem?

Line 2: “I do believe her, though I know she lies.”

9. Which lines represent the **volta** in this poem? What “shift” takes place?

The volta takes place in the couplet. Right before the end of the poem, the speaker asks two questions: *But why doesn't she tell me she is unfaithful? And why don't I just tell her I'm old?* Then the speaker continues with the reasoning behind their mutual deception and that it works in their favor. The word “Therefore” marks a summing up of the argument where the speaker admits that they both lie to each other but that this allows them to stay together.

The tone shifts here too. The description of their relationship goes from extremely complicated to simple. At first, readers might find the relationship disturbing or jarring, but the tone of the speaker at the end is playful.

10. What is the meaning of the final couplet? Why do the lovers allow each other to lie?

The final couplet means that their lies bring comfort to both their insecure minds. They stay together because they both are flawed and they have lust for each other regardless.

In the final couplet, the word “lie” is a pun. They “lie” to each other meaning they *deceive* each other and they also lie with another meaning they lie in bed together.

He lies about his age. She lies about her infidelity. He accepts her lies because he is lying too. The lies they tell each other help them forget or accept their respective faults. Their relationship works if she pretends he is young and if he pretends she is not cheating on him. Their lies flatter each other. She makes him feel worthy of love despite his age.

11. Do you agree with the following statement? “Love’s best habit is in seeming trust.”

Answers will vary. When we love someone, we give them the benefit of the doubt, even when we know they are flattering us. So, because he loves her, and she him, they put on the appearance of believing the flattering lies of the other one.

12. Is it always best to tell the truth? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. In this specific love affair, the two are obviously comfortable with each other's lying hence, I don't see a problem.