

A Twist at the End: The Sonnet

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Maybe. That all depends on the sonnet!

Today you'll be working with a team to figure out what exactly a poem needs to have in order to be called a sonnet. You'll examine a whole slew of published sonnets and you'll develop a guide for writing one. And maybe you'll also figure out whether or not you deserve to be compared to a summer's day!

Start by gathering with your team to choose a captain and a note taker for today. The captain will help keep things in order and will make sure everyone has something to do. The note taker will take notes on your team's discussion and discoveries; don't forget to take notes on your discoveries in your own journal.

Before you begin your investigation, take a few moments to discuss with your team what you already know about poetry. You can use the questions below to structure your discussion; but don't look anything up yet! Just figure out what you already know so you'll know what you need to find out. Jot down notes from your discussion on your "Sonnet Search" sheet.

- What makes a poem a poem? What does a poem need to have to be a poem? What must a poem NOT have? What special kinds of poems are there?
- What is rhyme? Offer some examples of rhymes.
- What is rhythm? Offer an example of a line from a song that has a rhythm to which you can tap your feet. Then create a line that doesn't have a rhythm to which you could tap your feet.

Now you're ready to investigate sonnets. As you conduct your investigation, keep in mind what you already know about poetry, about rhythm and about rhyme.

Take your piece of paper or a notebook, your "Sonnet Search" sheet and yourselves to a computer and access the Blackhawk Christian School Library Databases. This online library is FILLED with resources on everything; today, you'll research sonnets.

There are many resources available. Today you will use Bloom's. You will also use Google advanced search.

SONNET SEARCH SHEET -- EXAMINING SONNET SAMPLES

PAGE ONE

List all group members' names here:

Captain's Name:

Note Taker's Name:

1. What does your group already know about poetry, rhyme and rhythm?

2. In the space below, write down the name of each sonnet you examine, the name of the poet who wrote it and the year in which it was written. Explain what you think the poem is about; offer your thoughts on the way the poem explores that topic. Finally, write down any patterns you notice-- of words, of lines, of sections and of the whole poem.

- Do this for five sonnets. Try to find sonnets by different authors.

Title and Author	Year	What's the sonnet about?	Your thoughts on the poem's exploration of topic	Patterns

SONNET SEARCH SHEET -- EXAMINING SONNET SAMPLES

PAGE TWO

Title and Author	Year	What's the sonnet about?	Your thoughts on the poem's exploration of topic	Patterns

Explore the patterns in the various sonnets you examined. With your group, develop a list of at least six rules for sonnets. Don't worry about being "right," just make sure that you base your conclusions on actual observations. Write your six rules and how you figured them out in the space below. Be prepared to explain your findings to the class!

SONNET SEARCH SHEET -- SONNET SPECIFICS

PAGE ONE

List all group members here:

Now that you've familiarized yourselves with sonnets, you can look up a more formal definition.

Go to the library databases; use Bloom's. Use the search bar to find Petrarchan Sonnet and Shakespearean Sonnet. There are two major kinds of sonnets, each type with its own form -- Shakespearean and Petrarchan. You should find out the rules for each of them and note them below.

	Shakespearean Sonnet	Petrarchan Sonnet
Number of Lines		
Rhyme Scheme		
Names of Sections		
Other Rules		

Now that you're a sonnet expert, you're ready to try writing a sonnet of your own. You'll start with your group, writing the first stanza of a Shakespearean sonnet. The guide provided on the "Writing a Sonnet" page will help you through the process. You will be asked to share your stanza with the class; afterwards, you'll work individually to write a Shakespearean sonnet or a Petrarchan sonnet of your own. You can use the same process you used to write with your team when you start your own sonnet. You can also use the first stanza from your group work to begin your own sonnet; just make sure the last ten lines are your own!

WRITING A SONNET

PAGE ONE

1. As a group, pick out a topic for your sonnet. In the space below, explain what your sonnet will be about.

2. The first two lines of your Shakespearean Sonnet are easy to write because they don't have to rhyme. In the space below, try out a few ideas for first lines, using ideas from everyone in the group.

FIRST LINE IDEAS:

3. The next line doesn't have a fixed rhyme yet; in the space below, try out a few ideas for the second line, using ideas from everyone in the group.

SECOND LINE IDEAS:

4. Now count the syllables in each line. Does each one have ten syllables? If you have too many, which words could be cut out? If you have too few, what words could you add? Consider adding adjectives, including colors, to help expand the line and make it more interesting. Write a revision of your first two lines in the space below, making sure you have the right number of syllables.

LINES ONE & TWO, EDITED:

WRITING A SONNET

PAGE TWO

5. The next two lines (lines three and four) will need to rhyme with those that you already wrote; the third line must rhyme with the first line and the fourth line must rhyme with the second. In the space below, write down all the words you can think of that rhyme with the last word in each of your first two lines.

Words that rhyme with the last word of the FIRST line:	Words that rhyme With the last word of the SECOND line:

Rewrite your first four lines, or *quatrain*, in the space below.

WRITING A SONNET

PAGE THREE

Look over the quatrain. Make sure all the lines have ten syllables. Finally, read your first quatrain aloud a couple of times and consider any changes that you might make to make it clearer, more beautiful or simply more interesting. In the space below, offer two changes you could make.

Write the final version of your Shakespearean sonnet in the space below. Practice it a few times so that you're ready to share it with the class!