

The Sonnet

Shakespeare is known for using the **sonnet** form both as poetry and within his plays. Sonnets are recognized by several key features.

As you read about each of these features, identify them in one of Shakespeare's most famous poems, Sonnet 130, on the right.

1. They have **14 lines**.
2. They follow a particular **rhyme scheme**. The rhyme scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet is as follow: ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG. The letters indicate which lines end with words that rhyme; lines 1 and 3 rhyme (A), 2 and 4 rhyme (B), etc.
3. They end with a **couplet**, two lines that rhyme, that makes a final statement about the theme of the poem.
4. They are centered around an **emotion**.
5. They often contain a **turn**, representing a shift in direction, tone, theme or message. In Shakespeare's sonnets, this usually comes in the 8th or 9th line, but could also occur in the final couplet. It is often signified by starting the line with words such as "But" or "Yet".
6. They are written in **iambic pentameter**. **Iambic** refers to the rhythm of a pair of syllables that are read in a soft/LOUD or unstressed/STRESSED pattern. It is said that this is a very natural rhythm because it resembles a heartbeat. **Pentameter** refers to five sets of 2 syllables per line of poetry. This means that each line of poetry should only have 10 syllables total.

A line of iambic pentameter flows like this:

baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM.

1. Color-code the following elements and identify them within the poem:

[] Rhyme scheme [] Couplet [] Turn
[] Iambic [] Pentameter

2. What emotion does this sonnet focus on?

3. How does the couplet make a statement that serves as the theme of this poem?

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red than her lips' red;

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

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

I have seen roses damasked, red and white, 5

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound; 10

I grant I never saw a goddess go;

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

And yet, by heav'n, I think my love as rare

As any she belied with false compare.