Shakespearean sonnet: an 14 line stanza written in iambic pentameter, that employs the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef,gg, and can be divided into three quatrains and a couplet.

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

OOOOH Baby I think I shall compare you to a summer day
But, you know, you're prettier and even better, even calm
Because sometimes it gets windy and the buds on the trees get shaken off
And sometimes summer doesn't last very long
Sometimes it's too hot
And everything gorgeous loses its looks
By getting hit by a truck Or just because everyone and everything gets old and ugly and shabby
BUT (and here's the turn) you're going to keep your looks for ever
Your beauty will last for ever
I'm going to make sure that you never lose your good looks
And that nasty old Death can never brag about owning you
Because I shall write this poem about you
As long as men can breathe (are you breathing?)
As long as men can see (are you looking at this poem?)
Then this poem lives, and it gives life and memory to your beauty.

Sonnet 29

When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon my self and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least,
Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate,
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Sonnet 29

When I feel and lucky and as if no one likes me
And I feel all alone and cry
And it's as if my prayers to heaven have no power at all because no one is listening
And I feel sorry for myself and think that 'm the unluckiest person alive
I wish that I had that persons opportunities
That I looked like that cute person and was as popular as the most popular person in my class
Wishing that I had that man's talent, and that man's understanding of difficult concepts
Not at all happy with the things I usually enjoy.
Even then, almost hating myself for thinking this way
Perhaps my thoughts think about you, and then my soul,
Just like the lark that sings at the moment the light of day
Breaks over the cold earth, sings a song filled with joy and light
Because I remember the sweet love we share, and the richness that it brings
And, at that point, remembering what we have together, I wouldn't change
my present condition even with a king.

http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/language/lessonplan.html

**Language Arts: Shakespeare's Sonnets**

**Introduction**

One of the difficulties teachers face when they teach Shakespeare is language accessibility. Twenty-first century students simply have difficulty understanding the words, and so they miss the meaning of his plays and sonnets. This is no small loss. Thus, it is a teacher's responsibility to help students not only understand the language but also to empower them, so that when faced with difficult texts they feel as if they can, with a little effort, appreciate what Shakespeare is saying.

However, the lesson can be easily tailored to a teacher's specific students. It's also easy to see, then, that the activities can be extended into a piece of literary analysis, or even the writing of a sonnet, that can be taken from outlines to first draft through revision and into a final draft.

**Learning objectives**

Students will:

* Identify a Shakespearean sonnet
* Identify and label the rhyme scheme
* Identify and label iambic pentameter
* Identify and label a Shakespearean sonnet's divisions
* Write a definition for a Shakespearean sonnet
* Write a definition for paraphrase and its purpose
* Paraphrase a Shakespearean sonnet

**Estimated Time of Completion**

Two 45-minute class periods

**Materials**

* [Handout](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/lng-lp_sonnets.pdf) with sonnets 18, 29, 130
* Overhead Projector
* A copy of "In Search of Shakespeare" (To order, visit [Shop PBS](http://www.shoppbs.org/product/index.jsp?productId=1452174))
* A TV and DVD player or TV

**Introductory Activity**

The writings in this lesson come from Shakespeare's early years and were probably composed between 1592 and 1597. It is reasonable then to suppose that the inspiration came from the time between when he left [Stratford](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/locations/location27.html) and popped up on the literary scene in [London](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/locations/location154.html). Have the students view Episode One of "In Search of Shakespeare" and discuss what happened to Shakespeare during this time that had such a significant impact on him. What was the political and religious climate of [Elizabethan England](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/locations/location153.html)? What was the "split in English society" host [Michael Wood](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/theshow/mike.html) refers to?

It's good to ask the students questions such as "Who likes Shakespeare?" and "Why" "Why not?' This lets them vent their frustration about not being able to understand what he says, leads nicely into a discussion about the difficulties of Shakespeare's language, and sets up the upcoming lesson. Remind them about the plays they have read, and discuss what they liked and disliked about them. Also, offer some reassurance that, after this lesson, they will have the skills that will allow them to unlock Shakespeare's meaning.

**Procedure**

Put Sonnet #18 on the overhead projector. Then read the sonnet out loud.

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.

At this point ask the students if they understand what is being described in the sonnet.

Ask if any one recognizes any literary devices such as the apostrophe in the first line, the personification of the sun and death.

Then, with the original sonnet still on the overhead "paraphrase" the sonnet line by line.

Here's an example:

Sonnet 18

OOOOH Baby I think I shall compare you to a summer day
But, you know, you're prettier and even better, even calm
Because sometimes it gets windy and the buds on the trees get shaken off
And sometimes summer doesn't last very long
Sometimes it's too hot
And everything gorgeous loses its looks
By getting hit by a truck Or just because everyone and everything gets old and ugly and shabby
BUT (and here's the turn) you're going to keep your looks for ever
Your beauty will last for ever
I'm going to make sure that you never lose your good looks
And that nasty old Death can never brag about owning you
Because I shall write this poem about you
As long as men can breathe (are you breathing?)
As long as men can see (are you looking at this poem?)
Then this poem lives, and it gives life and memory to your beauty.

What is the students' reaction now? The girls will sigh, and boys will want copies! You can laugh with them, and point out how well Shakespeare understood the emotions of love, and how this sonnet has withstood the test of time.

Now that you've lead them into this moment, and have given them the basic information, pass out the [handout](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/lng-lp_sonnets.pdf) with sonnets 18, 29, 130

On the overhead projector using a transparency or using a power point computer demonstration, put up the definition of a Shakespearean sonnet and have students write down the definition. on the hand out you have given them. This way, when they review, they will have the definition right next to the poem itself.

Shakespearean sonnet: an 18 line stanza written in iambic pentameter, that employs the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef,gg, and can be divided into three quatrains and a couplet.

On the overhead using an overhead pen label the 14 lines, rhyme scheme, 3 quatrains and the couplet, and then walk around and monitor as students label their sonnets

Put the following definition of iambic pentameter on the overhead transparency.

Iambic Pentameter: lines of poetry that can be divided into 5 metric feet with alternately unstressed and stressed syllables.

Again, have students write the definition down on their handouts as you read it out loud. Then go back to the overhead of Sonnet #18 and mark the iambic pentameter like this:

Shall I/ compare/ thee to/ a sum/ mer's day
Thou art/ more lov/ly and/ more temp/orate

At this point, it is best to read the sonnet out loud as you mark the metric feed and unstress/stressed syllables, and, use your voice to stress the iambic pentameter. I always tap it out too and then have students tap out the meter on their desks along with me. They really get the feeling of the rhythm of the line. This is where I make up a line in 21st American teenage-speak such as:

My name/ is John/ I love/to go/ to school

Then I have the students write their own lines, making sure they tap it out quietly to get it right. It's great fun to go around the students and ask them to give their sentences emphasizing the iambic pentameter. This makes it easy to see who has understood and who hasn't, and it's easy to correct verbally. Be prepared to laugh some more!

Have students read Sonnet #29, and then label the 14 lines, 3 quatrains, the couplet, and the rhyme schemeabab, cdcd, efef, gg. It would also be helpful to have them mark the iambic pentameter on first two lines. It is also helps to walk around and monitor student progress, and make quiet corrections as you go.

Sonnet 29

When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon my self and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least,
Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate,
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

When everyone has finished, put Sonnet #29 on overhead and read it out loud. Stop to discuss and answer any questions that may come up, and see if anyone "gets the message."

Here's the paraphrase to read

Sonnet #29

When I feel and lucky and as if no one likes me
And I feel all alone and cry
And it's as if my prayers to heaven have no power at all because no one is listening
And I feel sorry for myself and think that 'm the unluckiest person alive
I wish that I had that persons opportunities
That I looked like that cute person and was as popular as the most popular person in my class
Wishing that I had that man's talent, and that man's understanding of difficult concepts
Not at all happy with the things I usually enjoy.
Even then, almost hating myself for thinking this way
Perhaps my thoughts think about you, and then my soul,
Just like the lark that sings at the moment the light of day
Breaks over the cold earth, sings a song filled with joy and light
Because I remember the sweet love we share, and the richness that it brings
And, at that point, remembering what we have together, I wouldn't change
my present condition even with a king.

Your students should begin to understand the genius of Shakespeare now, so it's a good time to explain the inductive reasoning that gathers the evidence into an argument, but turns the argument around at the couplet. Also, explain that it's the couplet that usually provides the basic thesis or theme of the sonnet. However, if you ask students why they're beginning to understand the sonnets, they will say that it's because you are explaining them. So, you can tell them that now it's time to learn how to paraphrase.

Write the definition of paraphrase on the overhead transparency.

Paraphrase: A paraphrase takes difficult language and explains it in easier, more understandable, language. It is usually as long as and often longer than the original piece. It does not contain any of the original language.
[Michael Wood](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/theshow/mike.html) examines the sonnets in "In Search of Shakespeare." (Episode Three, 20:00-29:00). To help your students learn about the mystery behind these poems, show them this segment of the program. They may be surprised to find out who inspired Shakespeare to write these romantic poems.

Have your students use the [Glossary](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/glossary/index.html) on the Web site to help familiarize themselves with the language of Shakespeare's era.

**Extension Activity**

Have students turn to Sonnet #130 on their handout and label the rhyme scheme, the quatrains, and the couplet.

Individually have them read the sonnet silently, then put them into groups and have them work on the paraphrase together. They should turn in one piece of paper that has the paraphrase on it. This is either due at the end of class, or it could be written for homework that night.

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,
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:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet by heaven I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.

**Online Resources**

Shakespeare Online:
<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/>

Shakespeare's Sonnets:
<http://www.shakespeare-sonnets.com/>

All Shakespeare:
<http://www.allshakespeare.com/sonnets.php>

Frontline: Much Ado About Something:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/muchado/assignment4.html>

**Standards**

**NCTE and IRA:**

(<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>)

Standard 1: Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

Standard 2: Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Standard 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 6: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

Standard 11: Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

Standard 12: Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information.

**McRel**

([http://www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org/))

Standard 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Standard 5 : Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

Standard 6 : Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

Standard 7 : Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

**World History**

Standard 27: Understands how European society experienced political, economic, and cultural transformations in an age of global intercommunication between 1450 and 1750

**Handout**

[Shakespeare's Sonnets](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/lng-lp_sonnets.pdf)