Sonnet Study Essential Vocabulary

"The vessel, the sonnet form, actually becomes a part of the meaning of the poem." Thomas C. Foster

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Sonnet Types:

- Italian/Petrarchan
- English/Shakespearean
- Spenserian
- Alternative/blank

Anatomy of a Sonnet: [closed form] – 14 Lines (140 syllables) typically divided into two "units"

- couplet
- quatrain
- sestet
- octave
- rhetorical shift/turn/*volta*

Rhyme Patterns:

Note – the Italian language is more rich in rhyme than the English language which accounts for the adjusted rhyme pattern.

- Italian – abba abba cdecde [sestet can be many variations]
- English – abab cdcd efef gg
- Spenserian – aba**b b**cb**c c**dcd ee [interlocking rhyme with internal couplets]
- Other variations also apply including the blank sonnet which has no pattern of end rhyme.
- Other rhyme vocabulary: end rhyme, internal rhyme, slant rhyme, eye rhyme, masculine rhyme, feminine rhyme

Rhythm:

- iambic pentameter [rising meter] unstressed-stressed unit
- foot
- iamb [unstressed followed by stressed, example: **to-dáy**]

ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY CONTINUED:

Poetic and Rhetorical Devices:
**** You will likely find more devices than what is listed here and you may add them as you see them.****

- theme
- tone(s)
- point of view
- irony
- imagery
- connotation/denotation
- details
- syntax [sentence structure]
- enjambment
- repetition
- elision
- apostrophe
- paradox
- oxymoron
- pun

Poetic and Rhetorical Devices (continued):

- figurative language:
    - conceit/extended metaphor
    - metaphor
    - simile
    - personification
    - metonymy
    - synecdoche
    - hyperbole
    - litotes
- sound devices:
    - alliteration
    - assonance
    - consonance
    - onomatopoeia
    - cacophony / euphony

RHYME AND SONNET TYPE – Unlocking the "cheat codes"

What most readers learn first about poetry is the pleasure that comes from hearing rhymes. From our first Dr. Seuss experiences – "Would you eat them in a box? Would you eat them with a ____?" -- to most of the songs we listen to on the radio, we are programmed to appreciate the aesthetics of poetry. The different sonnet forms have prescribed rhyme schemes that can be quite complicated. Also worth noting is the fact that the rhyming words at the end of the lines often contain key concepts that help the reader unlock meaning.

To mark a rhyme scheme, the reader assigns a letter to each sound. The final syllable of the first line is given the label "a", then the reader looks at the end of the other lines and assigns an "a" to any that rhyme with the first line. Once done, the reader returns to the second line. If it is not marked (it typically does not rhyme with line one), then that syllable is assigned the letter "b." The process repeats until all lines are marked. Complete the following rhyme scheme notations.

Sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

1	Let me not to the marriage of true minds	_____
	Admit impediments. Love is not love	_____
	Which alters when it alteration finds,	_____
	Or bends with the remover to remove:	_____
5	O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,	_____
	That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;	_____
	It is the star to every wandering bark,	_____
	Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.	_____
	Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks	_____
10	Within his bending sickle's compass come;	_____
	Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,	_____
	But bears it out even to the edge of doom.	_____
	If this be error, and upon me prov'd,	_____
	I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.	_____

RHYME LESSON CONTINUED

Look back over the rhyming words in this poem and identify examples of each of the following.

Device of Rhyme	Line Numbers	Words
Masculine rhyme	*1/3;*	*minds/finds;*
Feminine rhyme		
Slant rhyme		
Eye rhyme		
Internal rhyme		

SONNET TYPE- Understanding the poem's "units" of meaning

Italian Sonnet Units	**English Sonnet Units**	**Spenserian Sonnet Units**
Octave (abba abba)	Three quatrains	Three quatrains
Sestet (cdecde, or cdcdcd, or cdcdee)	(abab cdcd efef)	(aba**b** **b**cb**c** **c**dcd)
	Concluding couplet (gg)	Concluding couplet (ee)

For each of the following sonnets, mark the units of division and identify the sonnet type.

"Whoso List to Hunt"

by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, alas, I may no more;
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that furthest come behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow; I leave off therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I, may spend his time in vain.
And graven with diamonds in letters plain,
There is written her fair neck round about,
"*Noli me tangere*, for Caesar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame."

Sonnet 18

by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

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 dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest;
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

STEP 5 LESSON- SONNET TYPE CONTINUED:

One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon the Strand

by Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,

But came the waves and washed it away:

Again I wrote it with a second hand,

But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.

Vain man, said she, that dost in vain assay

A mortal thing so to immortalize!

For I myself shall like to this decay,

And eek my name be wiped out likewise.

Not so (quoth I), let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name;

Where, whenas death shall all the world subdue,

Our love shall live, and later life renew.

METER – Recognizing and analyzing the poet's metrical choices

Each line of a sonnet is composed of five iambs (a unit of unstressed –stressed syllables), or a total of 10 syllables. However, on many occasions, a poet will need to be creative or combine syllables in a word to keep the meter sound. When a syllable is combined with another or even omitted, it is called an elision. For example, the word "over", a two-syllable word can be adapted to the word "o'er" a one-syllable word for poetic purposes.

For many, marking the rhythm is the most difficult part of the analysis process, and, admittedly, it is not as crucial as other steps in this project. However, the discerning student will look at the poem from all angles and learn as much as he/she can. A poet may wish to create an irregular meter for emphasis, and it is this very detail that could cause the reader to notice a key concept.

For the following 2 poems, mark the meter including foot divisions. Note any lines that are irregular

Holy Baptism

by George Herbert (1593-1633)

As he that sees a dark and shady grove,

Stays not, but looks beyond it on the sky

So when I view my sins, mine eyes remove

More backward still, and to that water fly,

Which is above the heav'ns, whose spring and rent

Is in my dear Redeemer's pierced side.

O blessed streams! either ye do prevent

And stop our sins from growing thick and wide,

Or else give tears to drown them, as they grow.

In you Redemption measures all my time,

And spreads the plaster equal to the crime:

You taught the book of life my name, that so,

Whatever future sins should me miscall,

Your first acquaintance might discredit all.

METER CONTINUED

Loving in Truth

by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,

That the dear she might take some pleasure of my pain,

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe:

Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,

Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow

Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;

Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame Study's blows;

And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.

Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:

"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

*[hint: this "sonnet" is **not** written in pentameter]*

DICTION – Understanding and analyzing an author's word choices

Sonneteers have only 140 syllables to establish a situation and convey meaning; therefore, every word counts. The reader must attend to every word carefully considering multiple meanings of words, looking for patterns of diction, and noting contrasts and repetition. For the reader, this is often the first layer of meaning to unlock.

Read the following poems and highlight in pink particularly impactful or strong connotative word choices. Take notes on the patterns, contrasts, etc. that you notice.

Baptism

by Claude McKay (1890-1948)

Into the furnace let me go alone;

Stay you without in terror of the heat.

I will go naked in--for thus 'tis sweet--

Into the weird depths of the hottest zone.

I will not quiver in the frailest bone,

You will not note a flicker of defeat;

My heart shall tremble not its fate to meet,

My mouth give utterance to any moan.

The yawning oven spits forth fiery spears;

Red aspish tongues shout wordlessly my name.

Desire destroys, consumes my mortal fears,

Transforming me into a shape of flame.

I will come out, back to your world of tears,

A stronger soul within a finer frame.

Notes on Diction:

DICTION CONTINUED

The Harlem Dancer

By Claude McKay (1890-1948)

Applauding youths laughed with young prostitutes
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.
Upon her swarthy neck black shiny curls
Luxuriant fell; and tossing coins in praise,
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,
Devoured her shape with eager, passionate gaze;
But looking at her falsely-smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

Notes on Diction:

PARAPHRASE – Putting the poem in your own words.

After a reader has examined the key words in the poem, he should seek to understand the dramatic situation and literal meaning. The best way to do this is to state the poem in your own words, sentence by sentence. Hint: Your vocabulary list from step 6 will be a valuable resource in this activity.

Paraphrase the following poems, sentence by sentence.

Death Be Not Proud

by John Donne (1572-1631)

Death be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,

Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally,

And death shall be no more, death thou shalt die.

Rewrite the poem sentence by sentence:

PARAPHRASE CONTINUED

Forgiveness

by John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been

Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;

So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,

One summer Sabbath day I strolled among

The green mounds of the village burial-place;

Where, pondering how all human love and hate

Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,

Wronged and wrongdoer, each with meekened face,

And cold hands folded over a still heart,

Pass the green threshold of our common grave,

Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,

Awed for myself, and pitying my race,

Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,

Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave!

Rewrite the poem sentence by sentence: (tricky!)

JOURNALISTIC QUESTIONS – Understanding and analyzing the narrative situation of the poem

One VERY important rule of poetry is never to assume that the speaker is the poet. The narrative voice in a sonnet will always be referred to, then, as "the speaker" not Shakespeare, Keats, or Browning. Through the centuries, Shakespeare's sonnets have transcended the identity of the bard and have adopted universal applications. For example, the speaker of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 29" could be a Renaissance gentleman lamenting his station in life; however, when I read I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou's autobiography, I reexamined this poem, Maya's favorite, from the point of view of a young African-American girl dealing with racism in the Jim Crow South, but treasuring the companionship of her brother.

Some poems, admittedly, are intimately tied to a poet's life. The works of John Keats are like this. He reflects on his mortality as a result of a serious illness. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, too, is famous for her Sonnets from the Portuguese, a sonnet sequence full of love poems for her husband, Robert. However, students still need to refer to the narrative voice as "the speaker" and not John Keats or Elizabeth Browning.

For the following poem, complete the journalistic questions in the right column.

Glory of Women

by Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967)

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave, ***Who?***

Or wounded in a mentionable place.

You worship decorations; you believe

That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.

You make us shells. You listen with delight, ***What?***

By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.

You crown our distant ardours while we fight,

And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed. ***When?***

You can't believe that British troops 'retire'

When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,

Trampling the terrible corpses--blind with blood. ***Where?***

O German mother dreaming by the fire,

While you are knitting socks to send your son

His face is trodden deeper in the mud. ***Why?***

SOUND DEVICES - Analyzing the manipulation of language (part one)

"The sound must seem an echo to the sense." - Alexander Pope

*The following lines are **from Alexander Pope's <u>An Essay on Criticism,</u>** a work that seeks to give advice to critics but also to discuss the qualities good poets should strive for in their own work. In this excerpt, Pope manipulates language cleverly to create sound effects appropriate for the subject matter and/or the tone of a poem. Pope argues that writing is a honed craft and writers make deliberate choices to promote their purpose. The entire work is written in heroic couplets (consecutive lines of rhymed iambic pentameter).*

From *An Essay on Criticism* [note: this is not a sonnet]

by Alexander Pope

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,

As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offense,

The sound must seem an echo to the sense.

Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,

And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;

But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,

The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar.

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,

The line too labors, and the words move slow;

Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,

Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.

*Highlight and label sound devices in the following poems and complete a D2M response for at least two of the examples you find. Explain **how** the sound contributes to the meaning.*

Sonnet 130

by William Shakespeare (1594-1616)

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 damask'd, 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.

Anthem for a Doomed Youth

by Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,--
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Line #	Device	Example	Explanation

D2M

FIGURES OF SPEECH AND LITERARY DEVICES –

Analyzing the manipulation of language (part two)

Poetry is compact language, like frozen concentrated orange juice. Often students will ask, "Why doesn't the poet just say what he means?" However, it is the very craft and manipulation of the language that creates the art. Readers should be on high alert for figures of speech and other literary devices. More often than not, the images in the poem are not just for aesthetics, but actually create the meaning.

For the following poems, highlight and label imagery, figures of speech, and other literary devices and complete one D2M response on your own paper explaining how one of the devices you marked helps create meaning in the poem.

Sonnet 73

by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day

As after sunset fadeth from the west;

Which by and by black night doth take away,

Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,

That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,

As the deathbed whereon it must expire,

Consumed by that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,

To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Notes on figurative language and poetic devices:

D2M

Line #	Device	Example	Explanation

The Street **Notes on figurative language and poetic devices:**

by James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

They pass me by like shadows, crowds on crowds,

Dim ghosts of men that hover to and fro,

Hugging their bodies round them, like thin shrouds

Wherein their souls were buried long ago:

They trampled on their youth, and faith, and love,

They cast their hope of human-kind away,

With Heaven's clear messages they madly strove,

And conquered,--and their spirits turned to clay.

Lo! how they wander round the world, their grave,

Whose ever-gaping maw by such is fed,

Gibbering at living men, and idly rave,

"We, only, truly live, but ye are dead."

Alas! poor fools, the anointed eye may trace

A dead soul's epitaph in every face!

D2M

Line #	Device	Example	Explanation

TONE – Understanding the complexity of the sonnet

Most well-written sonnets can be divided into two basic units. In the Italian sonnet, the octave introduces the situation, poses a question, establishes a mood, etc. and the sestet answers or concludes, sometimes contrasting the octave, sometimes increasing the degree of emotion. The English sonnet's three quatrains may establish different metaphors, serve as examples, establish a mood, etc. to prepare the reader for the concluding couplet. Occasionally, as in "Sonnet 29" the turn will occur in line 9, but more often than not, the couplet indicates this shift and reveals the meaning of the poem as a whole.

Use your Yellow Pages to help you identify precise tone words for each "unit" in the sonnets below. Read the following sonnets and discuss the tones.

To examine complexity, it may be useful to use the following template:

The speaker's tone is ***___A___****, but also* ***___B___****.*

Ozymandias

by Percy Byssche Shelley (1792-1822)

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Notes on Tone A:

Notes on Tone B:

America

by Claude McKay

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,

And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,

Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,

Giving me strength erect against her hate.

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred

Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,

And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,

Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

Notes on Tone A:

Notes on Tone B:

POETRY FOCUS STATEMENTS – Preparing to write a thesis statement

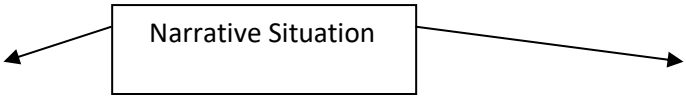
A poetry focus statement is a one to two-sentence summary of the narrative situation, theme, and tone of a poem. It serves as a concise note about a poem and can be used also as a potential thesis for a free-response poetry question on the AP Literature exam.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES:

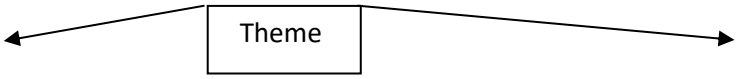
- ✓ *Includes the title of the poem and the name of the poet*
- ✓ *Is written in literary present tense*
- ✓ *Specifies the narrative situation of the poem*
- ✓ *Includes a thoughtful but concise indication of theme*
- ✓ *Identifies the tone(s) of the poem. These may be differing but complementary. Shifts in tone may be indentified as well.*
- ✓ *The syntax of poetry focus statements is compound or complex because you are addressing both the literal (the narrative situation) and the thematic.*

Model:

In "Sonnet 29," William Shakespeare creates a depressed and despairing speaker who



serendipitously reflects upon the love of a close friend in order to prove to the reader that no



matter how difficult life becomes, we can be content in the blessings of love.

Read the following poems and write a poetry focus statement for each.

If Thou Must Love Me

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile--her look--her way
Of speaking gently,--for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"--
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,--and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,--
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

Batter My Heart

by John Donne (1572-1631)

Batter my heart, three-person'd God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurpt town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy:
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.