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# Petrarch, Spenser, Shakespeare & the Sonnet Form

Sonnet 290

Sonnet 75

Sonnet 130

# The Sonnet Form

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- The sonnet is a 14-line lyric poem with a complicated rhyme scheme and a defined structure.
- 13<sup>th</sup> Century Italian poets introduced the sonnet form.
- The Italian poet Francesco Petrarch perfected the form that became known as the Italian Sonnet.

# The Sonnet Form

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- The sonnet is used to express personal feelings, especially those of love.
- Sir Thomas Wyatt introduced the sonnet into English literature.
- William Shakespeare mastered the form, and English sonnets became known as Shakespearean sonnets.

# Spenserian vs. Petrarchan

- A *1<sup>st</sup> Quatrain (4 lines)*
- B each quatrain addresses the
- A poem's main idea, thought, or
- B question
- B
- C
- B *2<sup>nd</sup> Quatrain*
- C
- C
- D
- C *3<sup>rd</sup> Quatrain*
- D
- E Final Couplet (2 Lines)
- E provides answer/summation

- A
- B
- B
- A *Octave (8 Lines)*
- A introduces situation,
- B
- B
- A
- C or C
- D or D
- C or E *Sestet (6 Lines)*
- D or C expresses a reaction
- C or D to the speaker's
- D or E situation

# Sonnet 292—Francesco Petrararch

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The eyes I spoke of once in words that burn  
The arms and hands and feet and lovely face,  
That took me from myself for such a space.  
Of time, and marked me out from other men,  
The waving hair of unmixed gold that shone.  
The smile that flashed with the angelic rays,  
That used to make this earth a paradise.  
Are now a little dust, all feeling gone.  
And yet I live, hence grief and rage for me  
Left where the light I cherished never shows,  
In fragile bark on the tempestuous sea,  
Here let my loving song come to a close.  
The vein of my accustomed art is dry,  
And this, my lyre, turned at last to tears.

A

B

B

A

A

B

B

A

C

D

C

D

C

D

Octave (Eight Lines)

Sestet (Six Lines)

# Sonnet 75—Edmund Spenser

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One day I wrote her name upon the strand,  
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 moral thing so to immortalize.  
For I myself shall like to this decay,  
And eke my name be wiped out likewise.”  
“Not So,” quod 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 name,  
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,  
Our love shall live, and later life renew.”

A

B

A

B

B

C

B

C

C

D

C

D

E

E

1<sup>st</sup> Quatrain

2<sup>nd</sup> Quatrain

3<sup>rd</sup> Quatrain

Final Couplet

# Shakespearean Sonnet

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- A **1st Quatrain (4 lines)**
- B **sets up a situation**
- A
- B \_\_\_\_\_
- C
- D
- C **2nd Quatrain (explores the situation)**
- D \_\_\_\_\_
- E
- F
- E **3rd Quatrain— (explores the situation)**
- F \_\_\_\_\_ **Usually a shift in thought occurs here or in the Final Couplet**
- G **Final Couplet (2 Lines)**
- G **(Resolves the situation.)**

# Sonnet 130—William Shakespeare

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 subdue,  
As any she belied with false compare renew."

