

Name: _____ Class: _____

Sonnet 18

By William Shakespeare
1608

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He wrote 154 sonnets and 38 plays, including Romeo and Juliet, which have been translated into every major living language. "Sonnet 18" is one of Shakespeare's best-known sonnets. As you read, identify the imagery and tone the speaker uses to describe the subject of the poem as well as the summer.

- [1] Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.¹
Rough winds do shake the darling buds² of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
- [5] Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion³ dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course,
 untrimmed;
- But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
- [10] Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,⁴
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest⁵ in his
 shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.⁶
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.



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1. **Temperate** (*adjective*): moderate or mild
 2. blossoms
 3. **Complexion** (*noun*): natural color or appearance, especially of the face
 4. you owe
 5. you wander
 6. you grow

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a theme of the sonnet?
 - A. Nature is indifferent to mankind and is often cruel and punishing.
 - B. Love is like the natural world in that it often changes and grows with time.
 - C. Love is grander and more enduring than what it is often compared to.
 - D. Love is the surest way to find happiness in life and the afterlife.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? / Thou art more lovely and more temperate." (Lines 1-2)
 - B. "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, / And summer's lease hath all too short a date." (Lines 3-4)
 - C. "And every fair from fair sometime declines, / By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;" (Lines 7-8)
 - D. "Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade, / When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st." (Lines 11-12)

3. Which of the following best describes the effect of the use of figurative language in the poem?
 - A. The speaker uses metaphors to compare his beloved to the summer, and criticizes the summer for being harsh and fleeting.
 - B. The speaker personifies the sun, and makes it appear like the sun is a friendly individual who one would want to be compared to.
 - C. The speaker personifies death to create conflict as he battles death for his beloved.
 - D. The speaker uses high diction throughout the poem, and makes his relationship to his beloved appear informal.

4. PART A: Which of the following best describes the function of "Time" in the poem?
 - A. The speaker declares that his beloved's loveliness will live on forever through his poetry, unlike the short-lived summer season.
 - B. The speaker laments the fleeting nature of summer, as it is his favorite season and he wishes its warmth and brightness could last longer.
 - C. The speaker admits that although his beloved's beauty will fade with time, his love will not fade.
 - D. The speaker explains that he loves his beloved more than he adores the summer because his beloved can love him back.

5. PART B: Which phrase from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "And summer's lease hath all too short a date." (Line 4)
 - B. "And every fair from fair sometime declines" (Line 7)
 - C. "But thy eternal summer shall not fade" (Line 9)
 - D. "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see" (line 13)

6. Re-read lines 9-14 of the poem. What is the conclusion of the sonnet and how does this contribute to the poem's overall meaning? Cite evidence in your answer.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Shakespeare is one of the most widely translated and read writers in history. Why do you think Shakespeare's writing has endured for so long?
 2. Love has consistently been a major theme in music, art, and literature. In your opinion, do poetry and love share a special connection? What does this poem teach us about love?
 3. In the poem, the speaker uses nature to describe his love. How is the speaker able to effectively compare the beauty of nature to the beauty of a person?