

Renaissance **sonnets** traditionally come in two types:

(1) The **Italian** (or **Petrarchan**) **sonnet** contains the following features:

An **octave** (eight lines) rhyming *abbaabba*

A **sestet** (six lines) of varying rhyme patterns, such as *cdecde* or *cdccdc*

Sir Thomas Wyatt in the early 1500s first introduced the Italian sonnet into English. It rapidly became all the rage.

(2) The **English** (or **Shakespearean**) sonnet contains the following features:

Three **quatrains** (sections of four lines, also called "staves"): *abab cdcd efef*

A concluding **couplet** (two rhyming lines): *gg*. Sometimes, the concluding couplet after the turn is called the **gemel**.

Note that, though this type of sonnet is called "Shakespearean," Shakespeare did not invent it. It was actually introduced by the Earl of Surrey and other English experimenters in the 1500s. Normally, the first part of the sonnet introduces a problem or question of some sort, which is developed in the first octave (in Italian sonnets) or the first three quatrains (in English sonnets). Then, there is a change in direction, thought, or emotion called a **volta** or a **turn**. The last sestet (in Italian sonnets) or the final couplet (in English sonnets) illustrates this change in direction, thought, or emotion.

#### ITALIAN SONNET

A  
B  
B  
A (Octave)  
A  
B  
B  
A  
----- (Volta, or Turn)  
C  
D  
E (Sestet)  
C  
D  
E

#### ENGLISH SONNET

A  
B  
A (Quatrain #1)  
B  
C  
D (Quatrain #2)  
C  
D  
E  
F (Quatrain #3)  
E  
F  
----- (Volta, or Turn)  
G  
G (Couplet)

### SONNET #1

1. From fairest creatures we desire increase, (a)
2. That thereby beauty's rose might never die, (b)
3. But as the ripper should by time decrease (a)
4. His tender heir might bear his memory (b) (quatrain 1)
5. But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes (c)
6. Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel, (d)
7. Making a famine where abundance lies, (c)
8. Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel. (d) (quatrain 2)
9. Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament, (e)
10. And only herald to the gaudy spring, (f)
11. Within thine own bud buriest thy content, (e)
12. And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding: (f) (quatrain 3)
13. Pity the world, or else this glutton be, (g) (turn/volta)
14. To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee. (g)

### SONNET #29

1. When, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes (a)
2. I all alone beweep my outcast state, (b)
3. And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries, (a)
4. And look upon myself, and curse my fate, (b) (quatrain 1)
5. Wishing me like to one more rich in hope, (c)
6. Featured like him, like him with friends possessed, (d)
7. Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope, (c)
8. With what I most enjoy contented least; (d) (quatrain 2)
9. Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, (e)
10. Haply, I think on thee, and then my state, (f)
11. Like to the lark at break of day arising (e)
12. From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate; (f) (quatrain 3)
13. For thy sweet love rememb'ed such wealth brings, (g) (turn/volta)
14. That then I scorn to change my state with kings. (g)