

## Assignment: Composing a Sonnet

**Directions:** Select one of the assigned Shakespearean sonnets for this class. Read it closely. You could pick a love sonnet, one of the sonnets urging the reader to have children, a sonnet about the Dark Lady, etc. Imagine you have just received this sonnet in the mail. It is addressed specifically to you from some unknown writer, who encloses a self-addressed, stamped envelope, so you can mail the poet a response.

Now compose a sonnet in response. In this sonnet of your own creation, you might return the poet's affections or agree to what the poet urges. Alternatively, you might spurn the poetic entreaties or refute the poet's arguments. The sonnet should be in either Italian or English format, and thus should conform to the required line length, number of lines, rhyme scheme, meter, and other traditions of the sonnet, including the conventions of Courtly Love. The content should visibly connect to the Shakespearean poem you "received" in the mail. After you have composed your sonnet, provide a brief commentary below it for your teacher in which you discuss any unusual features or effects you were trying to create. This commentary should be short, perhaps a paragraph in length, or at most one page. Please identify the number of the sonnet you are responding to at the top of your assignment, and include your name and course number.

Your new sonnet will be graded on the following features:

- (1) **Rhyme scheme:** Does your sonnet's rhyme pattern correspond to traditional sonnet format? Do you create unique rhymes rather than cliché and predictable rhymes like love/dove, etc.?
- (2) **Form:** Does your sonnet utilize the standard number of lines for its type? Does it make good use of the volta to show a "turn" or change of thought?
- (3) **Meter:** The prevailing meter should always be iambic pentameter, but you are encouraged to deviate in select feet in order to create poetic effect or emphasis, and then talk about that deviation in your commentary. To show your meter, write scansion marks above the words.
- (4) **Interactivity:** Does your poem address the same concerns, imagery, and questions that appeared in the Shakespearean sonnet to which it responds?
- (5) **Diction:** You may use contemporary language or Elizabethan English, provided your language is vivid and poetic rather than mundane. (Accurate use of Elizabethan vocabulary will impress me more than modern vocabulary, of course.)
- (6) **Originality:** Do you avoid clichés and trite expressions or rhymes? Can you express old and familiar ideas in new and striking ways?.
- (7) **Imagery:** Does your poem make vivid appeals to visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), gustatory (taste), olfactory (scent), and tactile (touch) imagery?
- (8) **Simile and Metaphor:** Does your poem employ any powerful comparisons through simile and metaphor, as was common in Elizabethan sonnets?
- (9) **Other Poetic Devices:** Does the poem make use of other poetic devices such as puns, alliteration, anaphora, or any other schemes and tropes? (For examples of schemes and tropes, see Course Packet, "Schemes and Tropes.")
- (10) **Pizzazz:** Pizzazz is the intangible and subjective stuff, the overall effect of the entire poem. It encompasses diverse elements such as a powerful emotional punch, cleverness, humor, and memorability.

**Due date:** As listed in the syllabus.