**POETRY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SONNET**

**A LECTURE**

**BY**

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**WHAT IS POETRY?**

Poetry is a fine art like life it is indefinable. It is something airy and vague but thrilling. To describe it in words is to attempt the impossible. One can at best point out some of its important elements and these elements are emotions, imagination and music.

The poetry means three things: -

1. Art of the poet

2. Essential quality of a poem

3. Literature in verse or rhythm

ST Coleridge defined prose as words in their best order and “poetry as the best words in the best order.” This definition is at once exact and brief.

William Wordsworth attempted an equally apt definition when he said, “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of the powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquility.”

Shelley himself described “poetry as the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest mind.”

Dr Johnson says, “Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure into truth by calling imagination to the help of reason”

Theodore Watts Dunton says, “Poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmic language.”

Matthew Arnold says, “Poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things and hence its importance.” He also said, “poetry is the criticism of life.”

Carlyle says, “Poetry is musical thought.”

Pope says, “What oft was thought, but never so well expressed.”

Shelley says, “poetry is the record of best minds…poetry makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in this world.”

Shakespeare says, “Poetry is the treasure house of precious thought.”

**KINDS OF POETRY**

**1. SUBJECTIVE POETRY**

When one describes his/her own feelings and experiences or the thoughts and feelings of some personality which he has used for the time being, the poetry is called subjective.

Lyric, ode, sonnet, elegy, song, hymn are examples of subjective poetry.

**2. OBJECTIVE POETRY**

When poet plays the part of an onlooker and describes the thought and experiences of his characters is called objective poetry. In other words, when the poet describes events or deeds which happened to others without revealing his personnel feelings we have objective poetry. All epics which relate the exploits of a great hero, all ballads which tell stories in verse all narrative poems which relate tales and all descriptive poems are forms of objective poetry.

**SONNETS**

A lyric poem of 14 lines that may be composed in one of the several conventional rhyme schemes. The sonnet form came into the English language through Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surry. Generally, English sonnets are written in iambic pentameter. As early as 1575 George Gascoigne described the sonnet form in the following manner,

Sonnet are of 14 lines, every line containing 10 syllables. The first 12 so rhyme in stanza of 4 lines by cross meter and the last two rhyme together to conclude the whole.

The three most popular sonnet forms in English are

The Petrarchan

The Shakespearean

The Spenserian

The Petrarchan sonnet is divided into an octave rhyming abba, abba and a sestet rhyming cde, cde. It is a form perfected by a Petrarch in which a 14 lines sonnet is divided into an octave rhyming abba abba and a sestet usually rhyming cde cde. Generally, the octave presents the theme and possess a question that is resolved in the sestet.

The Shakespearean sonnets have three quatrains and a couplet rhyming abab, cdcd, efef and gg.

The Spenserian sonnets also have three quatrains and a couplet, but the rhyme scheme is abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee.

**SHAKSEPEAREAN SONNET**

The Shakespearean sonnets have three quatrains and a couplet rhyming abab, cdcd, efe,f gg. The following sonnet number is 116 by Shakespeare illustrates the rhyme scheme……

“Let me not to the marriage of true minds (a)

Admit impediments- love is not love (b)

Which alters when its alteration finds (a) Or bends with the remover to remove (b)

Oh no! it is an ever fixed mark ( c)

That looks on tempest and is never shaken (d)

It is the star to every wandering bark ( c)

Whose worth’s unknown although its height be taken(d)

Love is not time’s fool thou rosy lips and cheeks (e)

Within his bending sickles compass come (f)

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks (e)

But bears it out even to the edge of doom (f)

If this be error and upon me proved (g)

I never writ nor no man ever loved” (g)

**The sonnet sequence-**

Sicily in 13th century, 1st English poet. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Earl Surrey, Phillip Sidney’s Astrophel and Stella (1591), Milton, Wordsworth, Samuel Daniel’s Delia (1592), Thomas Lodge (1593), Phillip’s, Henry constable’s Diana (1594), Michael Drayton, Idea Mirror (1594), Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti (1595). Of all the sonnets sequence of the period, the greatest was probably the series of 154 sonnets composed by William Shakespeare published in 1609, but in circulation since 1598.

Sonnets enjoyed immense popularity with Elizabeth and writers but fell out of favour after Milton. Interest in sonnets was revived during the romantic period since then the form has continued to be popular and has been the focus of considerable experimentation.

Sonnet is a gradual sense a short poem of 14 lines with special arrangements for rhymes. Its lines are nearly always in Iambic pentameter. It treats usually one thought or emotion mostly related to love.

A Sonnet is generally written in Iambic pentameter.

For example:

When tó / the sé/ssions óf / sweet, sí/lent thoúght

I súmm/on úp/ re-mém/brance óf/ things, pást

**SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS**

The sonnets written by William Shakespeare are known as Shakespearean sonnet. Like the Petrarchan and Spenserian sonnets, Shakespearean sonnets are comprised of 14 lines.

The sonnets are comprised of three quatrains (ab ab, cd cd and ef ef) and a couplet (gg). The rhyme scheme of Shakespearean sonnet is (ab ab, cd cd, ef ed and gg). The theme of the sonnets written are based on love theme for their nature-based sonnets.

In Shakespearean Sonnet the theme is remarkably different from what is found in the conventional Petrarchan Spenserian Sonnets. The basic theme of Shakespearean sonnet is of love Shakespearean sonnets is address to his friend possibly the Earl of Southampton Institute of following the conventional love theme the sonnets advertisement friendship and try to preserve his was his sonnets are address to a Dark Lady Whose identities mysterious Shakespeare's that lady is not beautiful and kind but dark and Cruel and his Emphasis is late not on her beauty and loyalty but on her whim and frailty. In Shakespearean sonnets the subject is stated and developed in the quatrain and summed up in the concluding couplet.

**LET ME NOT TO THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS**

**First publication date:1609**

**William Shakespeare (1564-1616)**

Let me not to the marriage of true minds (a)

Admit impediments. Love is not love (b) **FIRST QUATRAIN**

Which alters when it alteration finds, (a)

Or bends with the remover to remove. (b)

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark (c)

That looks on tempests and is never shaken; (d) **SECOND QUATRAIN**

It is the star to every wand'ring bark, (c)

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. (d)

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks (e)

Within his bending sickle's compass come; (f) **THIRD QUATRAIN**

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, (e)

But bears it out even to the edge of doom. (f)

If this be error and upon me prov'd, (g) **COUPLET**

I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd. (g)

**William Shakespeare the Immortal Poet and Dramatist:**

William Shakespeare is considered to be the greatest English dramatist and poet plays written in blank verse with some prose can be broadly divided into lyric plays, comedies, historical place and tragedies. He also wrote numerous sonnets. He was born in Stratford-on-Avon the son of a wool dealer. He was educated at the grammar school and in 1582 married Anne Hathaway. By 1592 Shakespeare was established in London as an actor and a dramatist, and from 1594 he was an important member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company of actors. Shakespeare was the leading playwright of the company and one of its business directors; he also continued to act.

About 1593 he came under the patronage of the Earl of Southampton to whom he dedicated his long poems and seems to have dedicated to him his sonnets written around 1593 to 1596. William Shakespeare fell in love with Marie Fitton who used to sing William Shakespeare songs and sonnets. This lady is known as the dark lady. Some critics believe that all the sonnets of William Shakespeare are wrote for the dark lady who got married to Earl of Southampton. In this triangular love the poor was left behind and the rich was adorned with a garland of loving knot. Thus, the Mysterious dark lady appears in almost all of the sonnets of William Shakespeare. He retired to Stratford-on-Avon about 1610 and died on 23rd April 1616. He was buried in the chances of holy trinity Stratford-on-Avon.

The poem, “Let me not to the marriage of true Minds”, Sonnet number 116 is written according to a typical Shakespearean Sonnet in iambic pentameter with three quatrains and a concluding couplet. There are seven rhymes with a typical Shakespearean organisation.

Four ab ab

Four cd cd

Four ef ef

Two g g

The line (1-4) of the poem, “Let me not to the marriage of true Minds”, the poet wants to say that the love which alters when it alteration finds or bands with the remover to remove, is not true and sublime love. The poet wants to establish Platonic and ideal love.

The line (5-8) of the poem, “Oh no is an ever fixed mark that looks on tempests is never shaken. It is like the star to every wandering bark, the worth of which is unknown, although its height is taken.

The line (9-12) of the poem, “Love is not times fool although rosy lips and cheeks come within his times bending sickles compass”. Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the age of doom. A person should not be attracted by the complexion, facial features and colours of an individuals. One must not pay more attention to rosy lips and rosy cheeks but to the purity of heart and minds. The behaviour, positive attitude, socio-moral, cultural, ethical values are important than the complexion. The true, sublime, pure, platonic, ideal love cannot alter within brief hours, days, weeks, months and years but bears it out even to the doom’s day.

The line (13-14) of the poem, “If this be an error and upon me proved then I never writ, nor no man ever loved”. It cannot be altered like we alter the dress and uniform. It must not be taken simply as a pastime. In the couplet of the poem the sonneteer has emphasized that if any person in the world can prove that the concept of the poet is wrong than he is emphasizing that he did not write anything (154 sonnets and 37 plays) and no man on this earth loved anybody.

In this poem the poet’s idealistic notion love is taken as existing beyond the reach of mortality or mutability which all devouring time causes.

“Let me not to the marriage of true Minds” or true love is one such vigorous sonnet of Shakespeare in celebration of love and its triumph overtime. Animated with the poet's exalted idealism of love, the sonnet expresses unequivocally his faith in the power of love to stand against all odds including the Mighty wrecks of time. A finely very well-conceived and rightly executed work, as it is, the Sonnet specify Shakespeare's single genius as a sonneteer.

The central theme of the poem is ennobled by Shakespeare's concept of true love. It echoes his deep conviction in the mutable and indestructible strength of love. True love admits ‘no impediments’ and ‘alters’ not with alteration of time or situation. It does not bend and break down under the pressure of situations. It is ‘ever fixed’ and steady, does not deviate from its constant devotion and serves to guide like the Pole Star in the sky that keep on guiding about all the directions when you are facing towards Pole Star at your back will be South direction towards your right hand will be east, towards your left hand will be West. Thus, as the pole star keep on guiding us same way the true love of any form will be guiding us in all odds and evens. When we are in the mid of the sea, looking in the sky towards North (Pole Star) then Pole Star and the light house keep on guiding us about the uncharted life at sea. The rough storm of Fortune fails to shake it in the least. It remains, as it were, ever a beacon light on the tempestuous journey of life.

Thus, the theme of the Sonnet contains the poet’s inspired idealism of love. True love is firm, unchangeable and ever dedicated but this is not the only matter traded here. The sonnet marks also the Idealistic concept of the superiority of love to the rough hands of time. The well-known time love theme of Shakespeare sonnets is here presented precisely with his idealism of love. Time, no doubt, kills youth and beauty, but love is not time’s fool and its loyalty or fidelity remains unaffected by the swift and continuous flow of time. In fact, in the poet's bold assertion love remains even to the edge of Doom. The poet remarkably perceives and asserts the power of his words to stand and prove the triumph of his love.

Indeed, the sonnet is a lofty praise of love as a sacred principle of living. The points deep devotion to love, as a high virtue of life is fully born out here. The inspiring motive is the idealisation of the constancy of love, and this is done by the poet’s positive emphasis- “Love’s not time’s fool”.

Indeed, love becomes triumphant in the poet’s voice and it is turned into a solace of life that restores all losses and vitalizes all feelings. The poet is impelled with his Triumphant hope for the immortality of his art, intending for preserving forever his love.

As a matter of fact, from the thematic standpoint this sonnet is a rich specimen of Shakespeare thoughts, reflection, noble sentiments, high ideas and sublimity. But it is no less rich in is craftsmanship which has given his sonnets a particular grace, a dignified and elevated quality. In imagery and melody there is a perfect uniqueness in the sonnet, seldom found elsewhere.

The poet’s concept of the triumph of love over time is well presented by his lively and presentation of time and love.

“Love’s not time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickles compass come”

The metaphor implied here is very happily conceived and equally happy is the poet personification of both ‘love and time’. The expression the ‘edge of doom’ serves to intensify the effect of the metaphoric charm, the imagery of love as an ever fixed mark on the uncertainty of life and the comparison of love to the start to every ‘wandering bark’ reveals the poet's highly imaginative potency. Here again, the metaphoric effect is well implied in the expression ‘wandering bark’.

The characteristic Shakespearean Sonnet structure with three quatrains and a cpuplet is quite felicitously employed here. The idea of the triumph of love is, precisely but quite coherently given out in the three quatrains, with the right pause between them. The concluding couplet contains the poet’s confidence in the power of his verse to perpetuate true love.

The Sonnet has in the manner of a typical Shakespearean sonnet, seven rhymes with a simple and happily chosen poetic diction and a melody that is well balanced with the poet’s idealistic mood and wonderful imagery. The meter used is iambic pentameter. In fact, a total impression of a very high art remains in the ultimate assessment of the sunnet that is thematically noble and technically high.

The sonnet is addressed to the poet’s girlfriend, his best friend’s wife Marie Fitton (The Dark Lady) in praise of the high ideal of love. It celebrates the lofty idealism of true love which is never shaken or shattered by adverse forces or under the pressure of circumstances. True love remains ever devoted and steady and is the very inspiration of life. Of course, time is mighty, cruel destroyer and ravages youth and beauty ruthlessly. Yet love is no slave of or subjugated to time. It even has the power to shine against the black doom that time causes. It does not change with the change of time, but preserves itis constancy and devotion all through.

Shakespeare’s subject here is love, and not his own love exclusively. The subjective love seems to have become the objective love. The poet speaks of his ideal Platonic love for Marie Fitton. The Dark Lady was desired in a very high spirit by the poet to make her dream girl. The poet has immortalised his true love in such a way that whole world is being inspired and motivated for this kind of perfection-oriented love. The whole world is remembering the poet’s and the dark lady love like the seven wonders of the world. He idealizes true love as the very principle that guides, motivates, inspires, steers and safely leads one to achieve the goal of one’s life.

CONCLUSION

At last, I would like to conclude that sonnets were first written in Italian and were traditionally love poems. Though the sonnet is a form that can be experimented with, it has remained true to its original length of fourteen lines and its Anglicized meter of iambic pentameter. Petrarch developed the sonnet to one of the highest level during early Renaissance Italy, but it was not translated into English until the sixteenth century. Shakespeare made the sonnet famous in England and others followed its lead. A sonnet can be helpful when writing about emotions that are difficult to articulate. It is a short poem. Hopefully, you will find yourself saying things you didn't know you were going to say, didn't know you could say, but that give you a better understanding of the emotions that drive the writing of the poem. In the modern age, we find that curtal sonnets are being written by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Sir Philip Sidney, Samuel Danial, Henry Constable, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Wattson, Michael Drayton, Edmund Spenser, William Wordsworth, Petrarch, Wyatt and Surrey were also great sonneteers.

**QUESTIONS**

1. [What is an analysis of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116?"](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-an-analysis-shakespeares-sonnet-116-1129044)
2. [What are the similes and uses of alliteration in Shakespeare's Sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-similes-uses-alliteration-shakespeares-sonnet-731452)
3. What literary techniques are used and what are the effects of these techniques in Sonnet 116?
4. What are some examples of figurative language and imagery in Sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare?
5. How does William Shakespeare use poetic devices throughout Sonnet 116?
6. [In sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare, comment on the poet's use of poetic devices](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/sonnet-116-by-william-shakespeare-comment-poets-536235).
7. [How does musicality contribute to the meaning of Shakespeare's sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/how-musicality-contribute-meaning-sonnet-116-524370)
8. [In the first eight lines of Sonnet 116, what metaphor does Shakespeare use to convey his](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/sonnet-116-shakespeare-metaphor-convey-love-522627)?
9. [What were Shakespeare's personal feelings about love?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-shakespeares-personal-feelings-love-491346)
10. [In Shakespeare's Sonnet 116: Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds explain what kind of love](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/shakespeares-sonnet-116-let-me-not-marriage-true-474584)?
11. [Are there any allusions in Sonnet 116 by Shakespeare "Let me not to the Marriage of True Minds" ?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/there-any-example-allusion-sonnet-116-by-439959)
12. [How many feet (metrical) are there in the first line of Sonnet 116, Let Me Not to the Marriage..?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/how-many-feet-metrical-there-first-line-sonnet-116-421589)
13. [What is the emotion of Shakespeare's speaker in Sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-emotion-author-420394)
14. [What is the theme of "Sonnet 116" by William Shakespeare?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-tone-theme-sonnet-116-whom-this-sonnet-382049)
15. [Discuss Universal elements in Shakespeare's Sonnets. Give Examples](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/discuss-universal-elements-shakespeares-sonnets-358122)
16. [What is a figure of speech in "Sonnet 116" by William Shakespeare?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/figure-speech-sonnet-116-shakespeare-357287)
17. [Could you briefly explain Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116"](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/would-like-have-summary-sonnet-116-348484)
18. [What language does Shakespeare uses to show the importance of a relationship in Sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-language-does-shakespear-uses-show-importance-344953)
19. [How can I reword my thesis statement on Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 to make it stronger?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/how-can-reword-my-thesis-statement-make-stronger-340385)
20. [Please provide an analysis of William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116."](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-summary-analysis-sonnet-116-by-shakespear-319591)
21. [How and why does Shakespeare use comparisons - especially similes and metaphors - in Sonnet 116](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/how-why-does-shakespeare-use-comparisons-293402)
22. [How is love presented in Shakespeare's sonnet 116 ("Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds")?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/discuss-love-envy-discouragement-universal-theme-293077)
23. [Please explain to me the figure of speech used in the line "let me not to the marriage of true](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/please-explain-me-figure-speech-used-line-let-me-272110) minds.
24. [What are the metaphors used by the poet to refer to the ever-fixed nature of true love in Sonnet 116.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-metaphors-used-by-poet-refer-ever-fixed-269257)
25. ["In Sonnet 116, Shakespeare considers time as the great adversary to love." Elucidate.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/sonnet-116-shakespeare-considers-time-great-268982)
26. [Describe the evolution of thought in "True Love," Sonnet 116 by Shakespeare.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/describe-evolution-thought-true-love-268975)
27. [Please analysis the poem "Sonnet 116" by William Shakespeare.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/please-analysis-poem-sonnet-116-by-william-265551)
28. [What is the theme of William Shakespeare's poem "Let me not to the marriage of true minds"?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-theme-william-shakespeares-poem-let-me-not-228999)
29. [How does Shakespeare use the sonnet form to develop the theme in "Sonnet 116"?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/how-does-shakespeare-use-sonnet-form-develop-theme-222971)
30. [In "Sonnet 116," what is the nature of the relationship described?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-nature-relationship-described-how-does-222333)
31. [Analyze Sonnet 116 ﻿by William Shakespeare.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/analyze-sonnet-116-by-william-shakespeare-208405)
32. [How does Shakespeare glorify true love in Sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/how-does-shakespeare-glorify-true-love-sonnet-116-194699)
33. [What is the main theme of the sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-main-theme-sonnet-116-152295)
34. [Explain each stanza in the sonnet 116?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/explain-each-stanza-sonnet-116-152229)
35. [Discuss three figures of speech used in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 116](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/discuss-three-figures-speech-used-shakespears-123361).
36. [Please explain "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds" (or Sonnet 116) by Shakespeare.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/please-help-me-explicate-poem-let-me-not-marriage-113597)
37. [Does the proposed view of love in Shakespeare’s "sonnet 116" function in the real world?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/does-proposed-view-love-shakespeares-sonnet-1-389944" \o "Does the  proposed view of love in Shakespeare's&#...)
38. [Critically, appreciate the sonnet, ‘Let Me not to the Marriage of True Minds’.](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/does-proposed-view-love-shakespeares-sonnet-1-389944" \o "Does the  proposed view of love in Shakespeare's&#...)