

Shakespearean Sonnets 18 and 130

Name: _____

Terms: Shakespearean sonnet, speaker

-Shakespeare, while most known for his plays, was the most important lyric poet of the time.

-There have been many theories about the autobiographical content of these sonnets, but none has been proven.

-Most people agree that there are three distinct phases in the sequence.

-The first group of sonnets refers to a handsome young man. In these poems, Shakespeare tries to advise the young man about making choices in life.

-The second phase of sonnets is addressed to a rival poet.

-The third group is addressed to a mysterious woman, who is often referred to as the “dark lady.”

Sonnet 18

1. What is the speaker’s opening question? Why might the speaker suggest a comparison such as the one in line 1?
2. The speaker says the listener is “more lovely and more temperate” than what?
3. What shall not fade? In lines 5–10, do you think the speaker is referring only to physical beauty? Why, or why not?
4. How long will the subject of this poem “live”? What has the speaker done with this sonnet?
5. List the ways in which the subject compares to a summer’s day. What, overall, is the speaker saying about the subject of this sonnet?

Sonnet 130

1. What image does the speaker paint of his mistress?
2. What does the speaker say about the woman’s eyes and lips? What do all of the characteristics that the woman does not possess have in common?
3. How does the speaker feel about the woman’s voice? Why might the speaker still love to hear his beloved’s voice?
4. What does the speaker think of his love? On what is the speaker’s love based? On what is it not based?
5. What ideal characteristics does the speaker say his mistress does not have? Why does the speaker point out the short-comings of his mistress in this regard?