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اسم المحاضرة الأولى باللغة الإنكليزية :

Sonnet 18: *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* by William Shakespeare

General meaning

The poet starts the praise of his beloved without ostentation and slowly builds the image of his beloved into that perfect being. His beloved is compared to summer in the first 8 lines as “more lovely and more temperate” than a summer’s day, but at the start of the 9th line, his beloved *becomes* summer as the poet states, “but thy eternal summer shall not fade.” With the 9th line of a sonnet often being the *volta* or the “turn” of the poem, this may be relevant. The beloved has become the very standard by which true beauty can and should be judged. The latter part of the poem is marked by a more expansive tone exploring deeper feelings. The poet responds to such joy and beauty by ensuring that his beloved will last forever, saved from the oblivion that accompanies death. The easy music of the poem may also work to reinforce the inferiority of summer compared to the beloved.

Summary: Sonnet 18

The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer’s day: he is “more lovely and more temperate.” Summer’s days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by “rough winds”; in them, the sun (“the eye of heaven”) often shines “too hot,” or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as “every fair from fair sometime declines.” The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his

beauty will last forever (“Thy eternal summer shall not fade...”) and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved’s beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live “as long as men can breathe or eyes can see.”

Analysis of the poem

For the first time, the key to the Fair Youth’s immortality lies not in procreation (as it had been in the previous 17 sonnets) but in Shakespeare’s own verse. But what is [William Shakespeare](#)’s Sonnet 18 actually saying?. First, then, that summary of Sonnet 18, beginning with that opening question, which sounds almost like a dare or a challenge, nonchalantly offered up: ‘Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?’

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:

Shakespeare asks the addressee of the sonnet – who is probably the same young man, or ‘Fair Youth’, to whom the other early sonnets are also addressed – whether he should compare him to a summery day. He goes on to remark that the young man is lovelier, and more gentle and dependably constant. After all, in May rough winds often shake the beloved flowers of the season (thus proving the Bard’s point that summer is less ‘temperate’ than the young man). What’s more, summer is over all too quickly: its ‘lease’ – a legal term – soon runs out. We all know this to be true, when September rolls round, the nights start drawing in, and we get that sinking ‘back to school’ feeling.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,

And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:

In lines 5-8, Shakespeare continues his analysis of the ways in which the young man is better than a summer's day: sometimes the sun ('the eye of heaven') shines too brightly (i.e. the weather is just *too* hot, unbearably so), and, conversely, sometimes the sun is 'dimmed' or hidden by clouds. And every lovely or beautiful thing ('fair' here in 'every fair' is used as a noun, i.e. 'every fair thing'), even the summer, sometimes drops a little below its best, either randomly or through the march of nature (which changes and in time ages every living thing).

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st

In lines 9-12, Shakespeare continues the 'Youth vs. summer' motif, arguing that the young man's 'eternal summer', or prime, will not fade; nor will the Youth's 'eternal summer' lose its hold on the beauty the young man owns ('ow'st'). Nor will Death, the Grim Reaper, be able to boast that the young man walks in the shadow of death, not when the youth grows, not towards death (like a growing or lengthening shadow) but towards immortality, thanks to the 'eternal lines' of Shakespeare's verse which will guarantee that he will live forever.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

In his concluding couplet, Shakespeare states that as long as the human race continues to exist, and read poetry, Shakespeare's poem ('this') survives, and continues to 'give life' to the young man through keeping his memory alive.

Literary devices

Shakespeare primarily uses imagery of nature throughout the poem to proclaim his feelings about the beauty of his beloved. He describes summer in a way that contrasts the kind of summer we usually picture. "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May" shows that the poet sees the summer climate as a blow to the spring flowers. He wants to show just how much better his beloved's beauty is compared to that of summer. Shakespeare works to tear down all positive thoughts of summer so that the reader can recognize just how much he lifts up the image of his beloved. In addition, when the poet describes the sun, he uses the words "gold complexion dimmed." The poet again downplays the familiar brightness of the warm, comforting sun, referring to its ray as "dimmed." As a result of describing the season's climate, the poet wants readers to see that his beloved has looks that will never change and that summer pales greatly in comparison to his beloved.

Metaphor

Life is not an easy passage through time for most (if not all) people. Random events can radically alter who we are, and we are all subject to time's effects. In the meantime, the vagaries of the English summer weather are called up again and again as the speaker attempts to put everything into perspective. Finally, the lover's beauty, metaphorically an eternal summer, will be preserved forever in the poet's immortal lines.

Symbols

Flowers and Trees

Flowers and trees appear throughout the sonnets to illustrate the passage of time, the transience of life, the aging process, and beauty. Rich, lush foliage symbolizes youth, whereas barren trees symbolize old age and death, often in the same poem, as in Sonnet 12. Traditionally, roses signify romantic love, a symbol Shakespeare employs in the sonnets, discussing their attractiveness and fragrance in relation to the young man. Sometimes Shakespeare compares flowers and weeds to contrast beauty and ugliness. In these comparisons, marred, rotten flowers are worse than weeds—that is, beauty that turns rotten from bad character is worse than initial ugliness. Giddy with love, elsewhere the speaker compares blooming flowers to the beauty of the young man, concluding in Sonnets 98 and 99 that flowers received their bloom and smell from him. The sheer ridiculousness of this statement—flowers smell sweet for chemical and biological reasons—underscores the hyperbole and exaggeration that plague typical sonnets.

Stars

Shakespeare uses stars to stand in for fate, a common poetic **Trope**, but also to explore the nature of free will. Many sonneteers resort to employing fate, symbolized by the stars, to prove that their love is permanent and predestined. In contrast, Shakespeare's speaker claims that he relies on his eyes, rather than on the hands of fate, to make decisions. Using his eyes, the speaker "reads" that the young man's good fortune and beauty shall pass to his children, should he have them. During Shakespeare's time, people generally believed in astrology, even as scholars were making great gains in astronomy and cosmology, a metaphysical system for ordering the universe. According to Elizabethan astrology, a cosmic order determined the place of everything in the universe, from planets and stars to people. Although humans had some free will, the heavenly spheres, with the help of God, predetermined fate. In Shakespeare's Sonnet 25,

the speaker acknowledges that he has been unlucky in the stars but lucky in love, thereby removing his happiness from the heavenly bodies and transposing it onto the human body of his beloved.

Weather and the Seasons

Shakespeare employed the **Pathetic Fallacy**, or the attribution of human characteristics or emotions to elements in nature or inanimate objects, throughout his plays. In the sonnets, the speaker frequently employs the pathetic fallacy, associating his absence from the young man to the freezing days of December and the promise of their reunion to a pregnant spring. Weather and the seasons also stand in for human emotions: the speaker conveys his sense of foreboding about death by likening himself to autumn, a time in which nature's objects begin to decay and ready themselves for winter, or death. Similarly, despite the arrival of "proud-pied April" (2) in Sonnet 98, the speaker still feels as if it were winter because he and the young man are apart. The speaker in Sonnet 18, one of Shakespeare's most famous poems, begins by rhetorically asking the young man, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (1). He spends the remainder of the poem explaining the multiple ways in which the young man is superior to a summer day, ultimately concluding that while summer ends, the young man's beauty lives on in the permanence of poetry.

The form of the poem

Sonnet 18 contains the elements of a classic sonnet. It is written in 14 lines and contains the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg*. The first and third lines and second and fourth lines rhyme, and the pattern continues until the last two lines, both of which rhyme. In addition, the poem is written in iambic pentameter. Each line has 10 syllables, with the first unaccented and the second accented. As a unit of writing, the sonnet has an organic beauty that depends on the balance of symmetrical and asymmetrical form and melody. And historically, sonnets have contained strong themes of love. As a result, Shakespeare

uses the sonnet form to highlight his message about his beloved and their magnificent appearance.

Something striking about this poem is how neat and perfectly tied up it is. Every single line is in perfect iambic pentameter and there is no enjambment. While the poetry is elegant and written in high and elevated language, the poem is still easy to read. The perfect adherence to the classic sonnet form may work to demonstrate the perfection of the beloved being described. This works well with the dominant theme of the poem.

The language of the poem

Shakespeare also uses figurative language to bring his message home. Shakespeare personifies the sun, calling it “the eye of heaven” with “his gold complexion dimmed” – the sun’s complexion dimmed in comparison to the beloved’s. Giving the sun a human quality begins to degrade what we normally consider the powerful, untouchable sun. This helps introduce Shakespeare’s theme of emphasizing his beloved’s lasting beauty. Another personification appears in line 11 when the poet writes “Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade.” Here, the poet portrays death as a figure who meanders around his “shade.” The act of equating death to a human being shows that his beloved transcends all living creatures and even acts of nature. The beloved is the ideal figure not only in the poet’s eyes but also in others who will eventually read this poem. The poet’s use of figurative language makes his beloved a superior being whose beauty forever shines and whose power can conquer death itself.

Note the use of the verb *shall* and the different tones it brings to different lines. In the first line, it refers to the uncertainty the speaker feels. In line nine, there is a sense of some kind of definite promise, while line eleven conveys the idea of a command for death to remain silent. The word *beauty* does not appear in this sonnet.

Both *summer* and *fair* are used instead. *Thou*, *thee* and *thy* are used throughout and refer

directly to the lover—the fair youth. The words *and*, *nor* and *so long* serve to repeat and reinforce the poem's ideas.

An instrumental part of making this poem work is that the poet makes it clear of his ability, as a poet, to eternalize words. The poet makes this known particularly in the lines “So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see / so long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” While the poet is saying that his beloved’s beauty will last for as long as this poem exists, he is also saying that his poetry will be eternal. The entire poem up until this point expresses great sentiment about his beloved but in these last two lines, there seems to be a change in the poem’s own estimate of his writing. These lines ultimately show that the poet is well aware of his skill. Overall, the use of imagery, form, and figurative language allows the poet to skillfully get his message across that his beloved’s beauty exceeds that of a summer’s day and even transcends time. Shakespeare’s methods also secure the everlasting nature of his poem.