

Worksheet 3 | Shakespeare's Sonnets

Sonnet 18

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

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red.
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
I grant I never saw a goddess go:
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

1. Look at these two sonnets by Shakespeare and answer the following questions:

a) What is unusual about the way these two poems use similes and metaphors?

b) Who do you think the poems might be addressed to?

c) How is the message in Sonnet 130 different from the message in Sonnet 18?

d) Which of these poems do you think is more conventional and in which poem do you think Shakespeare is playing around with the idea of love sonnets? Why?

e) Can you come up with your own comparison like the ones in Sonnet 130?
