

## SHAKESPEARE WEEK

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### Eighteenth Sonnet

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

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Taken from page 84 of [A Time to Speak and a Time to Listen](#)



## Eighteenth Sonnet

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

This is one of 154 sonnets written by Shakespeare, and one of a series addressing a youth whom he admired. Its continued popularity suggests that it still fulfils the promise of the final couplet: that as long as people live, so, through the poem, will its subject.

### Preparing to read this poem aloud

- Read at a measured pace, pausing briefly at each line-ending, allowing your phrasing to reflect the regular *iambic pentameter*, which is the *di-dum, di-dum, di-dum, di-dum, di-dum* rhythm of every line. Pause slightly longer before reading the final couplet, adding emphasis to its summarising statement.

### Compliments and comparisons

- Arrange the class in a circle. Explain that each pupil in turn must pay a compliment to the person on their left, moving clockwise, avoiding repetition and ending with the first speaker. Give examples: 'You have a lovely smile'; 'You are a great goalie'.
- Explain that the second time around the circle they are to create a simile, for example, 'Your smile is like sunshine'; 'You stop goals like a bulldozer'. Invite suggestions, encouraging them to be adventurous. Challenge them to invent metaphors, for example, 'You ARE sunshine'; 'You ARE a bulldozer'.
- Ask them which compliments they liked best and why. Discuss how it feels to be compared with a favourable thing.
- People who are cheerful have a 'sunny disposition'. Ask whether such a person would be better compared to a summer's day or a winter's day.
- Challenge the class to list every aspect of a perfect summer's day. (Warm, dry, flowers blooming, trees in leaf, birds singing, relaxing.) Quote George Gershwin's lyrics: 'Summertime, and the livin' is easy'. Consider why summer is said to be easier than winter (no fuel to fetch, no snow to clear, food harvested, and so on).
- Read aloud the sonnet. Then reread it, asking the pupils to listen for references to extreme weather conditions that can spoil a summer's day (such as the wind, which may damage buds [line 3], and the sun, which can be too hot [line 5]). Explain that the subject of the poem is lovelier than summer because he or she has none of these flaws.
- Ask them to explain the final couplet. Discuss how the poem is still relevant, that we are still able to see in it the person's perceived perfection even though hundreds of years have passed since Shakespeare wrote it.
- Return to the circle of compliments. Invite each pupil to adapt their comparison so that the compliment exceeds the comparison (for example, 'You run faster than lightning').

**EXTRA:** Challenge the pupils to paraphrase the final couplet, incorporating the gist of their compliment, such as 'As long as feet can kick and goals are saved, / As long lives this, that shows how you behaved.'

Taken from page 93 of [A Time to Speak and a Time to Listen Teacher's Guide](#)