

## William Shakespeare 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.

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 owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest 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.»

The sonnet belongs to Shakespeare's collection of 154 sonnets. The title of the sonnet is either its number or it corresponds to the first line of the sonnet.

Looking at the first line, which is also the title of the sonnet, the reader can immediately understand the speaking voice is talking to an unknown addressee "thee". The sonnet starts with the question "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" which is a rhetorical one since the speaking voice doesn't expect an answer. The speaking voice wonders if he can compare "thee" with the "summer's days". The image of summer's days reminds the reader to happiness and good feeling. The intelligent reader understands "thee" makes the speaking voice feel happy and in a good mood.

In the first quatrain, the speaking voice finds an answer to the rhetorical question. As I said before, the question is rhetorical since the poet already knows the answer: he feels sure he can't compare "thee" to summer days since he is much better because he is "more lovely and more temperate". The repetition of "more" reinforces the idea of the superior qualities of the Fair Youth since it creates a clear idea in the reader's mind that has been developed in the whole sonnet.

In The third and fourth lines, the reader understand what "more temperate" means. Indeed, summer winds can shake the buds of May since it is strong; the alliteration of the dental sound 'd' gives to the third line a high density, it slows down the rhythm of the line and it conveys the rigidity of nature in summer.

In the fourth line, the speaking voice tells why the comparison between "thee" and "summer's days" isn't suitable to represent the person he is referring to.

In this quatrain, the poet exploits the semantic field of nature to say that the "thee" is better than it.

Also in the second quatrain the reader can notice a comparison with nature: "eye of heaven" stands for the sun which is too hot. The metaphor is used to communicate the reader nothing is perfect, even not the sun; nature often change "is his gold complexion" into a dimmed one. Indeed nature loses its beauty because of the circle of the life, and so does the Fair Youth.

The third quatrain starts with "but" which is the turning point of the sonnet. the speaking voice directly refers to "thy" as he does in the first line of the sonnet, telling the fair youth that he would make him immortal through the lines even if he is human (so mortal).

This quatrain presents a circular structure: the first and the last line have the word "eternal", both the second and the third line start with "nor": this way, the quatrain creates the image of a circle, which remind the idea of infinity of the love.

The rhyming couplet has the function to communicate the answer/solution of the rhetorical question of first line.

It presents an anafora since both lines start with "so long": this construction suggests the reader the idea of something eternal. Since the poet makes the Fair Youth immortal through the lines of the sonnet, the man will survive as long as "men can breathe or eyes can see" so the love and the admiration for this Fair Youth will be everlasting.

To sum up, the sonnet is a way to express the idea of an eternal love toward the Fair Youth, who is more perfect than the nature since he is immortal.