

[Sample]
The World's Favourite Poetry

Ten Classic Poems That Have Been Loved by Generations

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Notes

This textbook will be most useful if it is printed out as a booklet so that students can take notes on the relevant pages in preparation for writing.

The poems are taught in chronological order.

Blank pages have been added so that students cannot see the exemplar paragraphs when they are writing their own.

	<p>Sonnet 18 (1609) by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)</p> <p>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:</p> <p>5 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimm'd; And every fair from fair sometime declines, By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;</p> <p>10 But thy eternal summer shall not fade Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest; Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade, When in eternal lines to time thou growest:</p> <p>So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, So long lives this and this gives life to thee.</p>	
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Context

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is the greatest writer in the English language. His plays and poems are famous throughout the world. His words have become part of everyday speech, so that people often quote him without realising.

Glossary

'lease' - temporary ownership. We only have summer for a fixed period of time.
'owest' - a similar idea to the 'lease'. The young man has possession of his beauty, but he 'owes' it, like someone who has borrowed something and must give it back.

Summary

Shakespeare compares a young man to a summer's day. The young man is more beautiful and more reliable, but most of all, he will last forever, because he will be immortalised by the poem itself. Although its rhyme scheme is Shakespearean (three quatrains and a couplet), thematically, the poem has a Petrarchan structure (an octave of eight lines followed by a sestet of six lines). The octave focuses on imperfection and mortality, while the sestet focuses on immortality.

How does Shakespeare depict the young man's beauty and immortality?

Starting Sentence	Quotations	Vocabulary
Shakespeare creates a vivid impression of the young man's beauty through contrast.	'Thou art more lovely and more temperate' 'too hot' 'dimm'd'	unreliable, English climate, summer weather
Notes:		
Starting Sentence	Quotations	Vocabulary
More important than the young man's beauty is his immortality.	'summer's lease hath all too short a date' 'every fair from fair sometime declines' 'eternal lines' 'so long as men can breathe and eyes can see'	metaphor, lease, ownership, time, mortality, natural, boast, accurate
Notes:		

How does Shakespeare depict the young man's beauty and immortality?

Shakespeare creates a vivid impression of the young man's beauty through contrast. In the octave, Shakespeare is focused on the imperfections in nature. Summer days, whilst they may be beautiful, are unreliable. The weather is rarely quite ideal, or 'temperate'. It can be 'too hot', but more often in the English climate, the problem is a lack of sun, as it is 'dimm'd' by clouds. In contrast, the young man's beauty does not change from day to day the way that the English summer weather tends to do, and this makes him, Shakespeare argues, 'more lovely and more temperate'.

More important than the young man's beauty is his immortality. Shakespeare uses the metaphor of a 'lease' - temporary ownership - to express the idea that our possession of beautiful summer days is strictly time limited, like the date on a legal agreement when the leaseholder must return the property. The time, moreover, is 'too short'. Summer never seems to be long enough, and comes to an end far too soon. This rule of time and mortality applies to everything in the natural world: 'Every fair from fair sometime declines'. Therefore Shakespeare aims to lift the young man out of material, natural existence into something that will be unchanging - the world of the poem itself, which will remain in existence and unchanged so long as 'men can breathe and eyes can see' - so long as there are people to read it. Shakespeare's boast has so far proven accurate, as more than 400 years later, his sonnet is more famous than ever, and loved around the world. He has created something that has outlasted his mortal life by many centuries, and looks set to continue doing so.

**'The Charge of the Light Brigade' (1854)
by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)**

I
5 Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.



II
10 "Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
15 Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III
20 Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
25 Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV
30 Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
35 Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

40	<p>V Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon behind them Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell, While horse and hero fell.</p>
45	<p>They that had fought so well Came through the jaws of Death, Back from the mouth of hell, All that was left of them, Left of six hundred.</p>
50	<p>VI When can their glory fade? O the wild charge they made! All the world wondered. Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred!</p>
55	

Context

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) is one of the greatest Victorian poets. He was the Poet Laureate for much of Queen Victoria's reign. During the 1850s, when Britain feared invasion by Russia, he wrote several patriotic poems celebrating the British war effort.

This poem is based on an historical incident that took place during the Crimean War, a conflict in Eastern Europe between the Russians on one side, and Britain and her allies on the other. On 25th October 1854, following a misunderstanding about an order from high command, Lord Cardigan led the Light Brigade in a frontal assault on well armed and well positioned Russian artillery and infantry units. As a light cavalry unit, they were not equipped for such an attack, and faced almost certain death.

Overview

Tennyson celebrates the bravery of a military unit which charges the enemy despite facing impossible odds: they are 'six hundred' against an 'army'. Though they are aware that a strategic error has been made ('someone had blundered'), they dutifully follow orders and charge into a valley under heavy artillery fire, engage the enemy in close combat, then retreat. Few of them survive the attack.

Glossary

'Half a league' - about a mile and a half

'blundered' - made an error

'shot and shell' - artillery fire

'sabres' - swords

'Cossack' - soldier from southern Russia

How does Tennyson immortalise the soldiers of the Light Brigade?

Starting Sentence	Quotations	Vocabulary
At the poem's conclusion, Tennyson asserts strongly that we should celebrate the actions of the soldiers.	'When can their glory fade?' 'Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred!'	rhetorical question, eternal, immortal, Victorian readers, imperative, memorial
Notes:		

How does Tennyson immortalise the soldiers of the Light Brigade?

At the poem's conclusion, Tennyson asserts strongly that we should celebrate the actions of the soldiers. He uses a rhetorical question to express the idea of the eternal glory which they have won through their courage and devotion to duty: 'When can their glory fade?' For Tennyson's Victorian readers, the answer is obvious: their glory will never fade, because they will be transported to eternal happiness as a reward for their sacrifice. The poem's imperative conclusion: 'Honour the Light Brigade / Noble six hundred' functions as a poetic war memorial. Tennyson aims to inscribe the Light Brigade on the memories of his readers as the names of soldiers are inscribed upon the stone of a war memorial, with the intention of perpetuating their memory down through the generations to the end of time.