Shakespeare’s sonnet 73

*That time of year thou mayest in me behold(1)*

*When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang*

*Upon those boughs (2) which shake against the cold,*

*Bare ruined choirs, where late(3) the sweet birds sang.*

*In me thou see’st the twilight of such day*

*As after sunset fadeth in the west;*

*Which(4) by and by black night doth take away,*

*Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.*

*In me thou see’st the glowing of such fire,*

*That (5) on the ashes of his youth doth lie,*

*As the death bed whereon it must expire*

*Consumed with that which it was nourish’d (6) by.*

*This thou perceiv’st (7), which makes thy love more strong,*

*To love that well which thou must leave ere (8) long.*

*(1)behold=see; (2)boughs=branches; (3)late=lately; (4)which= it refers to the twilight; (5)that=it refers to the fire; (6)nourished=fed; (7)perceive= see, notice; (8)ere= before*

1. Re-write or say the first two/three lines in a way that is more comprehensible today.
2. What figure of speech do you find in the first stanza?
3. What’s the meaning of “late” in line 4?
4. In the second stanza, the third line is difficult because we have to understand the role of the pronoun “which”. Moreover, where is the subject of the verb “doth take away”?
5. Again we find the same figure of speech in the same position as in the first stanza. Identify it.
6. The link between the second and the third stanza is clearly marked. By what?
7. In the third stanza we have again the problem of how to read the second line. Find the subject of the verb “doth lie” and reconstruct the line.
8. Now that you have read the first three stanzas, say what the poet has progressively done in them.
9. Read the final rhyming couplet and decide if it concludes the poem on a new note, introducing a new topic, or if it simply brings the reasoning of the poet to its conclusion.
10. Is this an Elizabethan or a Petrarchan sonnet? Why?