

= Sonnet 18 =

Sonnet 18 , often alternatively titled Shall I compare thee to a summer 's day ? , is one of the best @-@ known of 154 sonnets written by the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare . Part of the Fair Youth sequence (which comprises sonnets 1 ? 126 in the accepted numbering stemming from the first edition in 1609) , it is the first of the cycle after the opening sequence now described as the procreation sonnets .

In the sonnet , the speaker compares his beloved to the summer season , and argues that his beloved is better . He also states that his beloved will live on forever through the words of the poem . Scholars have found parallels within the poem to Ovid 's Tristia and Amores , both of which have love themes . Sonnet 18 is written in the typical Shakespearean sonnet form , having 14 lines of iambic pentameter ending in a rhymed couplet . Detailed exegeses have revealed several double meanings within the poem , giving it a greater depth of interpretation .

= = Paraphrase = =

The poem starts with a flattering question to the beloved ? " Shall I compare thee to a summer 's day ? " The beloved is both " more lovely and more temperate " than a summer 's day . The speaker lists some negative things about summer : it is short ? " summer 's lease hath all too short a date " ? and sometimes the sun is too hot ? " Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines . " However , the beloved has beauty that will last forever , unlike the fleeting beauty of a summer 's day . By putting his love 's beauty into the form of poetry , the poet is preserving it forever . " So long as men can breathe , or eyes can see , So long lives this , and this gives life to thee . " The lover 's beauty will live on , through the poem which will last as long as it can be read .

= = Structure = =

Sonnet 18 is a typical English or Shakespearean sonnet . It consists of three quatrains followed by a couplet , and has the characteristic rhyme scheme : abab cdcd efef gg . The poem reflects the rhetorical tradition of an Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet . Petrarchan sonnets typically discussed the love and beauty of a beloved , often an unattainable love , but not always . It also contains a volta , or shift in the poem 's subject matter , beginning with the third quatrain .

The couplet 's first line exemplifies a regular iambic pentameter rhythm :

x / x / x / x / x /

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see , (18 @.@ 13)