

## = Sonnet 86 =

Sonnet 86 is one of 154 sonnets written by the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare . It is the final poem of the Rival Poet subsection of the Fair Youth sonnets in which Shakespeare writes about an unnamed young man and a rival poet competing for the youth 's attention . While the exact date of its composition is unknown , scholars generally agree that the Rival Poet series was written between 1598 and 1600 and published along with the rest of the sonnets in the 1609 Quarto .

Within the sonnet , the speaker contemplates his inability to articulate his admiration for the Fair Youth , a fault he attributes to his jealousy of the Fair Youth 's appearance in the poems of the speaker 's Rival Poet . Sonnet 86 is notable within the Rival Poet subsection of sonnets because it allegedly provides important clues as to the historical identity of this Rival Poet . The sonnet is written in the typical Shakespearean sonnet form , containing 14 lines of iambic pentameter and ending in a rhymed couplet .

## = = Paraphrase = =

The poem , in which the speaker rhetorically asks why he has lost his ability to write poetry , uses boating references while staying closely connected to the poetic structure of a sonnet .

Below is a paraphrase , written in contemporary English and in prose .

Was it his ambitious poetry , which was written to win you , that stopped my ability to think ? Did it cause all of my ideas to die as soon as they were born ? Was it his heaven given ability , writing which was blessed by the gods , that stopped me in my tracks ? Neither he nor his companions who helped him were able to stop my poetic ability . Neither he nor the Muse which aids him each night can claim to have silenced me . For I am not afraid . However , when your beauty was gifted to him then I was lost and destroyed .

## = = Structure = =

Shakespeare 's sonnets follow the fourteen line rhyme scheme of the ' English ' or ' Surrey ' sonnet form ( abab cdcd efef gg ) . A sonnet originally referred to any short lyric . In 1573 , George Gascoigne tried to define the word sonnet . This definition , stated below , delineates the structure within which Shakespeare often wrote .

I can best allowe to call those Sonnets which are of fourtene lynes , every line conteyning tenne syllables . The first twelve do ryme in staves of foure lines by crosse metre , and the last two ryming together do conclude the whole .

While conventional English sonnet form described by Gascoigne is seen in Sonnet 86 , the Petrarchan sonnet form , which requires a pause between the first eight lines and the last six lines is also evident . At the end of line eight Shakespeare uses a period to bring the sonnet to a stop , changing the sonnet 's direction by moving away from rhetorical questions to a more decisive tone within the sestet , which seems to answer the distress of the octave .

The Shakespearean sonnet is composed in iambic pentameter , a type of poetic metre based on five pairs of metrically weak / strong syllabic positions . The 6th line exemplifies a regular iambic pentameter :

x / x / x / x / x /

Above a mortal pitch , that struck me dead ? ( 86 @.@ 6 )