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How to use this book

These beautiful poems can be read aloud in any order, and can be returned to often to be enjoyed for years to come.

The poems and questions grow steadily harder throughout this book. Therefore, students are advised to do the worksheets in order, and to make sure they understand any mistakes before moving on to the next pages.



Sonnet 130 (My Mistress' Eyes are nothing like the Sun)

By William Shakespeare

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 My mistress'* eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral¹ is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun²;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.</p> <p>5 I have seen roses damasked³, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks⁴.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
10 That music hath⁵ a far more pleasing sound;
I grant⁶ I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare⁷
As any she⁸ belied⁹ with false compare.</p> | <p>1 coral hard, shell-like substance found on the ocean floor, <i>known for its pink-orange colour and often made into jewelry</i></p> <p>2 dun grayish-brown, a dull colour</p> <p>3 damasked a fabric decorated with a woven design of mixed colours, <i>here refers to a rose patterned with white and red</i></p> <p>4 reeks stinks, smells strongly</p> <p>5 hath has</p> <p>6 grant to admit</p> <p>7 rare valuable, special, precious</p> <p>8 any she <i>here meaning any other woman</i></p> <p>9 belied misrepresented, given a false impressions of</p> |
|---|--|

*At the time Shakespeare was writing, 'mistress' was used in the same way as 'my beloved', 'my darling' or 'my love'.

Understanding content

- 1 Look up and write down definitions for the following words and phrases

Tread _____

By heaven _____

False compare _____

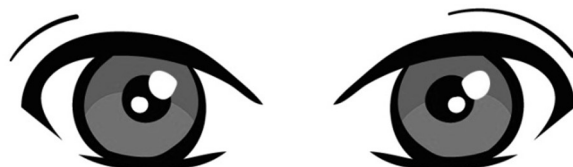
- 2 Using your own words, re-write the lines: '*I think my love as rare/ as any she belied with false compare*'.

- 3 Fill in the missing lines of this short summary for *Sonnet 130* with words from the box. Each word can only be used once. You cannot change the word form.

the sun	different	comparing	compliment	beautiful	roses	two
traditional	comparisons	opposite	none	clichéd	rare	

Sonnet 130 is like a _____ love poem that has been turned upside down. Usually, poets would _____ their beloved by _____ them to 'beautiful' things like _____, and _____. Instead, Shakespeare goes in a _____ direction, saying his mistress is _____ of these things. Then he completely changes what he's saying in the last _____ lines. He calls his mistress '_____ ' and says she does not need 'false compare'. This lets the reader know that it is not his mistress that is lacking anything, but that the traditional _____ of love poetry are _____, unnecessary and comical.

- 4 Read lines 13 – 14 again. What is the main message of these lines?
- the mistress is better than 'any she'
 - the mistress is not as beautiful as other women but still special to the speaker
 - the mistress doesn't need 'false compare' in order to be special to the speaker
 - the mistress is neither more nor less beautiful than 'any she'
- 5 How do you think Shakespeare feels towards his mistress?
- he feels nothing for her
 - he feels great love for her
 - he feels disgust towards her
 - he feels confused by her
- 6 Read lines 1 - 11. Which list of descriptions is **not** referring to the mistress?
- rosy cheeks, white breasts, coral-red lips, eyes like the sun, floats like a goddess
 - rare, hair like black wires, dun breast, reeking breath, walks on the ground
 - rosy cheeks, white breasts, red lips, eyes like the sun, floats like a goddess, rare
 - rare, hair like black wires, white-dun breast, reeking breath, walks on the ground



- 7 Look at the descriptions in option **a** of question 5, what are they usually used to describe?
- a a 'beautiful' or 'attractive' woman's features
 - b an 'average-looking' woman's features
 - c an 'ugly' or 'unattractive' woman's features
 - d they are not used to describe appearance
- 8 What words best describe the tone of the poem and how Shakespeare talks about his mistress?
- a insulting and serious
 - b flattering and romantic
 - c indifferent and cold
 - d humorous and romantic

Interpreting Tone

When a person speaks, the tone of their voice can tell us if they are upset, hesitant, excited, angry, and so on. The same is true for written texts; the speaker in this case is the writer. The tone of their writing tells the reader how the writer feels about the subject

Look at the passages below, they are describing the same scene but the tones are very different.

They walked onto the field in long **undefined** lines. They held their guns with **trembling** hands above the long wet grass. With a **desperate** cry they **stumbled** toward the enemy. Debris hailed from the sky; they **fumbled** onward, **chaotic and lost**.

Clues about tone

Words like 'undefined', 'trembling' and 'chaotic and lost' all evoke an atmosphere of uncertainty and there is a tone of desperation and confusion.

How the writer feels

The writer feels negatively about the war/battle he is describing. This could be a comment on his feelings of how pointless war is in general.

They walked onto the field in long **precise** lines. They held their guns with **steady** hands above the long wet grass. With a **primal** cry they **charged** toward the enemy. Debris hailed from the sky; they **pressed** onward, **victorious**.

Clues about tone

Words like 'precise', 'steady' and 'victorious' evoke an atmosphere of certainty and there is a tone of resolve and confidence.

How the writer feels

The writer feels positively about the war/battle he is describing. This could be a comment on his feelings of the necessity of war in general.

It is important to note that the tone of a *text* is not the same as the feelings of a *character*. It is not what the characters in the text are feeling, but *the feeling of the writer*. When writing about tone, always remember to use **evidence** from the text (words, phrases, expressions) to support your argument.

An analysis of tone should include:

- ❖ What the tone is, usually described in the form of an adjective
- ❖ What evidence is there to support this?
- ❖ How does the tone help us to understand the message of the poem?

Below is an example of how a short analysis of tone for *Sonnet 130* could look.

what is the **tone**
 +
 what **evidence** is there to support this
 +
 what does it say about the meaning of
 the poem

The tone of the poem can be described as **humorous and sarcastic**. The poem is full of clichés and exaggerated descriptions. **When Shakespeare says his mistress is ‘nothing like the sun’ and then goes on to give a less flattering description of his own mistress, he is showing how foolish the exaggerated comparisons used by most poets are. This becomes clear in the last two lines. Here, Shakespeare calls the exaggerated comparisons (what his mistress is *not* like) ‘false compare’.** The sarcastic tone and his humorous descriptions of his mistress then turn rather romantic. His mistress does not need exaggerated comparisons. They are unnecessary and slightly ridiculous, and that is ultimately the point of the poem itself.

- 1 Add one more word to describe the tone of this poem and support your choice with evidence from the sonnet.

2 Look at lines 1-10. In which line does Shakespeare change his tone? What word choice alerts the reader to this change?

3 Read lines 11 - 14. How does Shakespeare signal that there will be yet another change of tone? Think both about language and about structure.

4 Shakespeare's sonnets are often split into two sections - the first shows us a problem; the second shows us the opposite, a resolution. Draw a line under line 8 to divide the poem into two parts.

a) Read lines 1 – 8. What do you think the problem in the first eight lines is?

b) How does this change in the last six lines?

5 Quote an example of each of the techniques below and put a tick next to the one which you think is the most important to the tone of the sonnet.

- Comic exaggeration:** _____
- Clichéd description:** _____
- Sincere expression of emotion:** _____

6 Read line 11. What literary technique is used here? Comment on the effect.
