10H Remote Learning Assignment #6

1. Read the 3 poems below. These are Shakespearean (aka Elizabethan) **sonnets**. Note that even though the third is not by Shakespeare, it is still a Shakespearean sonnet in terms of form. Use these poems to try and guess what the definition of a **sonnet** is. (Don’t feel like you have to analyze these poems. That’s not the purpose here.) The answer is provided later in this document, so if you don’t want spoilers, then don’t read ahead.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45087/sonnet-18-shall-i-compare-thee-to-a-summers-day>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56227/sonnet-147-my-love-is-as-a-fever-longing-still>

<https://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/robert-frost/on-a-tree-fallen-across-the-road-3/>

1. Definition: A **Shakespearean sonnet** is a 14-line poem with the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg* (ie lines of corresponding letters end-rhyme with each other). It often has the stanzaic arrangement of 3 quatrains and a couplet (3x4 + 1x2 = 14). Every line is written in iambic pentameter or blank verse (remember that blank verse, as opposed to loose blank verse, has a metrical pattern, not just a syllabic one).

That’s it for formal requirements, but there are also some patterns to the

*rhetorical structure* that can be observed. A Shakespearean sonnet often makes an argument, like a thesis, and states that in the first quatrain—this argument is usually about some abstract idea (eg love or time), often deliberately complex. The second quatrain develops, clarifies, or complicates that idea. The third quatrain makes a turn and/or provides a counterexample. The final couplet provides resolution—it wraps the argument up.

Other things that tend to be true of sonnets, even if by accident: the sonnet is the verse equivalent of a paragraph. Because it is one of the shorter verse forms and yet it tends to take on complicated ideas, it challenges the poet to be concise. Because they challenge the poet to introduce, develop, counter-develop, and resolve a complicated idea in a mere 14 lines (of about 10 syllables), sonnets are often about time itself, particularly the tragically or bittersweet quick passage of time—they are often about this even if they don’t mention time; it’s an undertone, or subtext. There’s that feeling of being swept through, but there’s an elegance to the tightly woven meter and rhyme scheme. So, the *formal* qualities alone often give sonnets the *carpe diem* theme.

1. But I’m not going to ask you to write a Shakespearean sonnet. I’m going to ask you to write a **customized sonnet**. You can write a Shakespearean sonnet if you really want—many poets still do today, and many of them are really good. I find it a little too restrictive to hold myself to every single one of the requirements and *still make it a good poem*, and why use a particular form if it’s not going to help produce a *good poem*?

With this in mind, read all the below. These are all **customized sonnets**. As you

read each one, try to identify which aspects of the definition above the poet has customized.

<https://cathy-edgett.livejournal.com/136067.html>

<https://poets.org/poem/primer-daily-round>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=B4XwDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA688&dq=RS+gwynn+Shakespearean+Sonnet&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjc1YbBjMfoAhWwlHIEHZBzBgsQ6AEwAHoECAUQAg#v=onepage&q=RS%20gwynn%20Shakespearean%20Sonnet&f=false>

<https://whateverdude69-blog.tumblr.com/post/2897724547/icicle-by-david-huddle>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/05/16/the-facebook-sonnet>

1. And here are a couple of my own **customized sonnets**:

**My Grandfather’s Deathbed**

A piece of glass I stepped on went under

the skin and nudges against a tendon.

I’ve tried scraping at it with a needle,

my wife with a tweezers—we can’t find it.

So I have an invisible presence

inside me. When I’m still, I can’t feel it.

When I try to stand or walk forward on

my foot, my whole body feels asunder.

Or maybe a bone’s broke and hesitant

to swell because it’s not yet time to heal:

what is fractured has been there all along,

separation disguised as intrusion.

But if I can’t tell whether this is real,

how do I know my heart is not a stone?

**Football Talk with my Daughter**

I’m driving, and Olive says from the back:

“Ryan D. says he’s going to the game.”

“I don’t think so,” I say, “he’s only 3.

Atlanta’s really far. He’d have to take

an airplane.” “Do you have to take a plane

to New York?” she says. “No, we drove there when

you were a baby.” “Was Ella there?” “No,

she was with Grandma.” “Was Warren there?” “No,

Warren wasn’t born yet.” “So he was in

Mommy’s tummy.” “No, not even.” “So he

was really small,” she says. “No, he wasn’t

small. He was nothing. He didn’t exist.”

“So he was in the clouds, like Grandpa Cross.”

“*No*.” “Then he was in someone’s shoe.” “*N*... Yes.”

1. **HERE IS THE ACTUAL ASSIGNMENT: Write 2 more poems of your own. At least one of them should be a CUSTOMIZED SONNET.** The other may also be in this form, but could be another form with which you are familiar. The *topics*, based on your nominations and votes, are: **sleep** and **procrastination**.

If you can’t decide how to customize the form of the sonnet, here is a simple list

of elements you might follow:

-14 lines

-loose blank verse (instead of strict blank verse or iambic pentameter)

-some rhyme scheme (like every line rhymes with some other line)

-more slant rhymes than exact rhymes

\***If you accept this mission, share poems with me by Fri 4/3\***