**The Sonnet: ‘So-not’ worth it?**

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**William “Billy” Shakespeare (wrote 154 sonnets)**

Today we’ll read two quick Sonnets and we’ll discuss the Sonnet form. The sonnet is a famous and extremely old kind of poem (500-600 years old give or take) that comes from Italy. Usually it talks about all kinds of love gone wrong (unrequited, unsuccessful, unacknowledged etc.) and today that’s what we’ll focus on; nevertheless, sonnets can do much more. The Sonnet comes in all shapes and sizes; however, its most famous ingredients are listed below. (Sometimes called an Elizabethan or Shakespearean Sonnet).

What do we need to build a sonnet?

1. 14 lines
2. A Rhyme Scheme (usually ABAB CDCD EFEF GG)
3. Iambic Pentameter (five groups of strong/weak beats)
4. A Broken Heart (optional)

* Let’s read Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 29.” We’re going to ignore the meaning of the words and focus on the sounds? Can we hear the rhymes? Can we hear the iambic pentameter? What do we think about the sound of the poem? About the way the words ‘move’ when they are read aloud?
* Bonus Question: Where does Shakespeare mess with the rules of his poem? Are there any places in this poem where we are ‘missing ingredients’?
* Let’s read the Edna St. Vincent Millay sonnet and do the same thing. Can we hear the rhymes? The iambic pentameter? Do we like this poem better? Why? Where is the language different, where is it the same?
* Let’s do some detective work: what do we think is going on in Edna St. Vincent Millay’s sonnet? What happened/is happening? What can we learn from reading the poem?

**Sonnet 29 or “When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes”**

By William Shakespeare

When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,

I all alone beweep my outcast state,

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,

And look upon myself and curse my fate,

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,

Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,

Desiring this man’s art and that man’s scope,

With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,

Haply I think on thee, and then my state,

(Like to the lark at break of day arising

From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven’s gate;

For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings

That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

**“What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why”**

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,

I have forgotten, and what arms have lain

Under my head till morning; but the rain

Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh

Upon the glass and listen for reply,

And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain

For unremembered lads that not again

Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.

Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,

Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,

Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:

I cannot say what loves have come and gone,

I only know that summer sang in me

A little while, that in me sings no more.