

## SONNET WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to help you write your own Shakespearean sonnet (see Sonnets Made E-Z on page 34 and The Writer's Craft on page 46). Remember, the first two quatrains usually pose a problem or state an opinion which is either solved or turned inside out by the third quatrain and final couplet. But don't let the rules intimidate you. Think of sonnets as 16<sup>th</sup>-century date bait.

You can start off with one of these famous first lines:

- Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?...
- Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest...
- When I consider every thing that grows...
- Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war...

Or, you can create your own sonnet, from start to finish.

**Quatrain 1****Rhyme Scheme**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ----- | a |
| ----- | b |
| ----- | a |
| ----- | b |

**Quatrain 2**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ----- | c |
| ----- | d |
| ----- | c |
| ----- | d |

**Quatrain 3 (reply or reverse)**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ----- | e |
| ----- | f |
| ----- | e |
| ----- | f |

**Closing Couplet (the 1-2 punch!)**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ----- | g |
| ----- | g |

# Writing a Sonnet

Sonnets have been a popular form of poetry for hundreds of years. There are several forms of sonnets, but the differences between them are very slim. Below we are talking about the English or Elizabethan Sonnet form.

A sonnet is made up, at it's most basic, of 14 rhymed iambic pentameter lines (iambic pentameter means the line has 10 syllables). The differences between sonnet styles lies in how they are partitioned off. The type of sonnet we like to use is the Shakespearean Sonnet.

A Shakespearean Sonnet (named after William Shakespeare who composed several beautifully written sonnets) is blocked off in the following rhythmic pattern: abab, cdcd, efef, gg (each letter stands for a line, all lines with the same letter are supposed to rhyme). Though there are distinct divisions in the rhyming pattern (i.e., between the abab and cdcd), the divisions are not visually implicated.

For example, in Shakespeare's sonnet number 30, the third, fourth, fifth and sixth lines, though the beginning and end of 2 sections of the sonnet (the last ab and first cd) they are written like so:

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes' new wail my dear times waste:  
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,

*They are **NOT** written like so:*

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes' new wail my dear times waste:

Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,

*Here is the complete Sonnet 30, by William Shakespeare:*

<sup>1</sup>When <sup>2</sup>to <sup>3</sup>the <sup>4</sup>ses<sup>5</sup>sions <sup>6</sup>of <sup>7</sup>sweet <sup>8</sup>si<sup>9</sup>lent<sup>10</sup> thought (a) The Superscript indicates the <sup>10</sup> syllables.  
I summon up remembrance of things past, (b)  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought, (a)  
And with old woes' new wail my dear times waste: (b)  
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow, (c)  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night, (d)  
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe, (c)  
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight: (d)  
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone, (e)  
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er (f)  
The sad account of fore-bemoaned\* moan, (e)  
Which I now pay as if not paid before. (f)  
But if the while I think of thee, dear friend (g)  
All losses are restored and sorrows end. (g)

*\*the last "e" in "bemoaned" is stressed.*

It may seem difficult to write this type of poetry, but it is really quite simple, because the format is so exactly laid out for you. Just remember the rhyming sequence and that there are 10 syllables in iambic pentameter, that means that there are exactly 10 syllables in every line.