The Sonnet
A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter with a carefully patterned rhyme scheme.
The Sonnet

- The Italian, or Petrarchan sonnet

- Its fourteen lines break into an
  - octave (or octet), which usually rhymes abbaabba
  - sestet, which may rhyme xyzxyz
The Sonnet

- The English or Shakespearean sonnet,
  - three *quatrain* and
  - a *couplet* -- that is,
  - it rhymes *abab cdcd efee*
The Sonnet

- In other words, the poet is using the structure of the poem as part of the language act: we will find the "meaning" not only in the words, but partly in their pattern as well.
The Sonnet

- The sonnet can be thematically divided into two sections:
- The first presents the theme, raises an issue or doubt,
- The second part answers the question, resolves the problem, or drives home the poem's point.
  - This change in the poem is called the turn and helps move forward the emotional action of the poem quickly.
The Sonnet

- The Italian form, in some ways the simpler of the two,
  1. usually projects and develops a subject in the octet,
  2. then executes a turn at the beginning of the sestet,
  3. so that the sestet can in some way release the tension built up in the octave.
“Farewell Love and all thy laws for ever”

- Farewell Love and all thy laws for ever, a
- Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more; b
- Senec and Plato call me from thy lore b
- To perfect wealth my wit for to endeavour. a
- In blind error when I did persever, a
- Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore, b
- Hath taught me to set in trifles no store b
- And scape forth, since liberty is lever. a

- Therefore farewell; go trouble younger hearts c
- And in me claim no more authority; d
- With idle youth go use thy property d
- And thereon spend thy many brittle darts. c
- For hitherto though I have lost all my time, e
- Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb. e

- Wyatt Devonshire (1557)
The Sonnet

The Shakespearean sonnet has a wider range of possibilities.

1. One pattern introduces an idea in the first quatrain,
2. complicates it in the second,
3. complicates it still further in the third, and
4. resolves the whole thing in the final couplet.
"Sonnet 138" or "When My Love Swears that She is Made of Truth"

- When my love swears that she is made of truth
- I do believe her, though I know she lies,
- That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
- Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.

Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue,
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.

But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told:

Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

- William Shakespeare

{First quatrain; note the puns and the intellectual games: [I know she lies, so I believe her so that she will believe me to be young and untutored]}

{Second quatrain: [Well of course I know that she doesn't really think I'm young, but I have to pretend to believe her so that she will pretend that I'm young]}

{Third quatrain: [so why don't we both fess up? because love depends upon trust and upon youth]}

{Final couplet, and resolution: [we lie to ourselves and to each other, so that we may flatter ourselves that we are young, honest, and in love]. Note especially the puns.
The Sonnet

- Pay close attention to line-end punctuation, especially at lines four, eight, and twelve, and to connective words like and, or, but, as, so, if, then, when, or which at the beginnings of lines (especially lines five, nine, and thirteen).
The Italian, or Petrarchan sonnet:
- Fourteen lines
- iambic pentameter
- Consists of an octet (eight lines) of two envelope quatrains
  - Usually abba abba,
  - Sometimes abba cddc,
  - Or rarely abab abab;
  - The turn occurs at the end of the octet and is developed and closed in the sestet.
- And a sestet (six lines)
  - Which may rhyme xyzxyz
  - Or xyxyxy
Review

The English or Shakespearean sonnet:

- Fourteen lines
- Iambic pentameter
- Consists of three Sicilian quatrains (four lines)
- And a heroic couplet (two lines)
- Rhymes: abab cdcd efef gg
- The turn comes at or near line 13
Your assignment: Analyze

- Figure out which poem is Shakespearean and which is Petrarchan
- Summarize the plot of the poem using the sonnet form
- Now, work to find tone and how it changes and shifts (annotate)
- What part of DIDLS did the author use to affect the tone?