

William Shakespeare
To me, fair Friend
Wrap your mind around these ones!

Worksheet by:
Keith Tankard
Knowledge4Africa.com

WARNING: RUN THESE IDEAS PAST YOUR TEACHER BEFORE PLACING THEM AS ANSWERS TO YOUR EXAM PAPER!

1. In an earlier worksheet, it seemed acceptable to speak of the "fair Friend" as being, perhaps, a lover or someone whom the poet admires greatly. When one thinks carefully about this, however, one finds several problems with such an interpretation.
 - Examining the sonnet as a whole, can you identify these problems? (10)
 - If one were to conclude, then, that the "fair Friend" was not a person whom the poet ardently admires, what then could this "Friend" be? (2)

2. "To me, fair Friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I eyed
Such seems your beauty still."
 - If the poet is indeed speaking of some earlier sonnet which he had written, then in what way could this fair Friend "never . . . be old"? (2)
 - What then would the poet mean when he says, "As you were when first your eye I eyed"? (2)
 - And in what way would "Such [seem to be] your beauty still"? (2)

3. "Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived."
 - Accepting that the poet is probably thinking of an earlier poem as being his pride and joy, how then could beauty "steal from his figure"? (4)
 - In this context, then, what does the poet mean when he says, "So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand, hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived"? (4)

4. "For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred, --
Ere you were born, was beauty's summer dead."
 - In the context of the "fair Friend" not being a person but a poem he had written some three years earlier, how then would you explain this outrageous exaggeration by which he concludes his sonnet? (4)

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