



Example Poem Summary

*Shall I compare thee to a
summer's day?*

You should complete a poem summary for each of the poems studied in class. It should be detailed and must be original. It should serve as a reference point for future revision.

Poet

William Shakespeare

Structure

The poem opens with the poet directly questioning the reader, asking if he should compare the reader to a summer's day. Shakespeare then lists a number of reasons why the reader is more beautiful, using a series of natural images. In the second half of the poem (sestet), Shakespeare moves to discuss how, unlike summer, the reader's beauty will never fade. The poem ends by suggesting that as long as men are on the earth, the reader will always be beautiful.

Poetic Form

The poem is written as a traditional Shakespearean sonnet with 14 lines written in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is a-b-a-b-c-d-c-d-e-f-e-f-g-g.

Language

The poem contains several examples of natural imagery that compares the reader to the beauty of the summer season.

The poet uses various modifiers (e.g. 'too') to suggest that the reader is more beautiful than nature itself.

The rhetorical question at the opening of the poem directly addresses the reader, heightening the romantic feel of the poem.

Key Quotation

'So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.'

Explanation

This quotations suggest that no matter how old the reader is, as long as there are eyes to see them they will always be seen as beautiful.

The repetition of 'So long' emphasises the certainty of this statement alongside the eternity of the beauty. This attempts to flatter the reader into accepting the poet's advances.

The use of the words 'breathe' and 'see', two of the fundamental bodily functions of human beings, further emphasised the eternal nature of her beauty.