

English Literature A Level: what to do before September

| Compulsory | Highly recommended to 'get ahead' | Going 'above and beyond' |
|---|---|---|
| Buy 'Othello' by Shakespeare (one with 'translations' and extra information to help you is useful) | Read 'Othello' and 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' | Watch Youtube videos about Classical Greek tragedies |
| Buy 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' by Thomas Hardy | Watch a version of 'Othello' either live or online | Watch the BBC's Tess of the D'Urbervilles (not for exact content but for an idea of characters and landscape) |
| Buy 'Death of a Salesman' by Arthur Miller | Find out about Thomas Hardy's main concerns and ambitions for his writing | Find out about Renaissance and tragic plays |
| Create a fact-file about how women were treated in each era (Renaissance; Victorian; 1940s/50s America) | | |

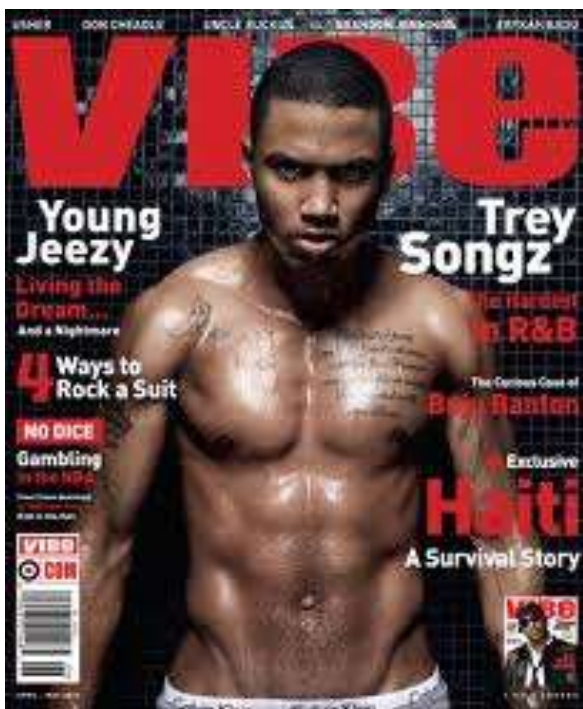
Whilst it is important to have a break over the summer, remember that the more you do in preparation, the easier you will find the course.



THINK



- Imagine that you've been asked to write a sonnet about the modern representation of love in the media. What would your first line be? _____
- Challenge yourself and write your line in 10 syllables.
- Example: I see, I breathe, I touch, I leave: you grieve.



Shakespeare's Sonnet 116



Learning Outcomes

By the end of today's lesson, you should know:

To annotate and analyse how Shakespeare explores the theme of love in Sonnet 116 (considering language, form and structure.)

Sonnet 116 was first published in 1609 (during his lifetime) and is one of the most famous sonnets in the world. It is about everlasting love and is widely known for its idealistic vision of a loving relationship.

Sonnet 116



An Introduction

Sonnet 116 was first published in 1609 and is one of the most famous sonnets in the world. It is about **everlasting love** and is widely known for its **idealistic vision of a loving relationship**.

The poem begins by stating that no one can stand in the way of true love. Shakespeare says **that love is constant and unchanging** through any difficulties. In line six, love is compared to the north star and Shakespeare says that love will not fade but will last forever. The words 'love will alter not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of the doom', mean that **love is timeless**.

In the final two lines, Shakespeare says that if there is no such thing as true love, that he has never written a word and nobody has ever experienced it. However, because the poem exists, Shakespeare is saying so does true love.

FORM: Shakespearean Sonnet

Take down some bullet point notes.



Shakespearean Sonnet

- 17th century
- 14 lines: 3 quatrains and a couplet
- The volta comes in the couplet
- Iambic Pentameter
- a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g

Volta is a sharp turn
which brings the
poem to its
resolution.

Write these translations onto your copy of the poem, to help you.

- Impediments = Problems
- Ever-fixed = Never ending
- Tempests = Storms (real and emotional)
- Bark = Ship
- Compass = Range
- Doom= implicitly refers to doomsday
- Bending sickle = A sickle is a curved blade typically used for harvesting grain. Death typically holds a sickle.



Let me not declare any reasons why two
True-minded people should not be married. Love is not love

Which changes when it finds a change in circumstances,
Or bends from its firm stand even when a lover is unfaithful:

Oh no! it is a lighthouse
That sees storms but it never shaken;
Love is the guiding north star to every lost ship,
Whose value cannot be calculated, although its altitude can be
measured.

Love is not at the mercy of Time, though physical beauty
Comes within the compass of his sickle.

Love does not alter with hours and weeks,
But, rather, it endures until the last day of life.

If I am proved wrong about these thoughts on love
Then I recant all that I have written, and no man has ever [truly] loved.

Shakespeare says that love is constant and unchanging through any difficulties.

In line six, love is compared to the north star and Shakespeare says that love will not fade but will last forever.

PUN
on
ALTAR

Sonnet 116 'Let me not to the marriage...'

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
5 O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
10 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Lighthouse image.

Marriage of true minds is a metaphor for people who get on well intellectually.

Love is timeless. The edge of doom refers to the religious notion of doomsday.

The North Star: the northern axis of the earth points towards it.



Rhyming couplet
– VOLTA (TWIST).

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In the final rhyming couplet Shakespeare says that if there is no such thing as true love, that he has never written a word and nobody has ever experienced it. However, because the poem exists, Shakespeare is saying so does true love.

William Shakespeare

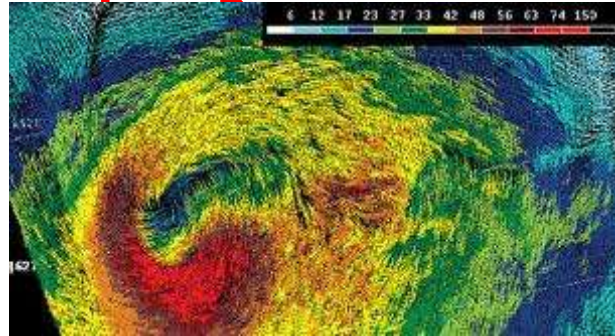
Write down this poem's main messages about

love: _____

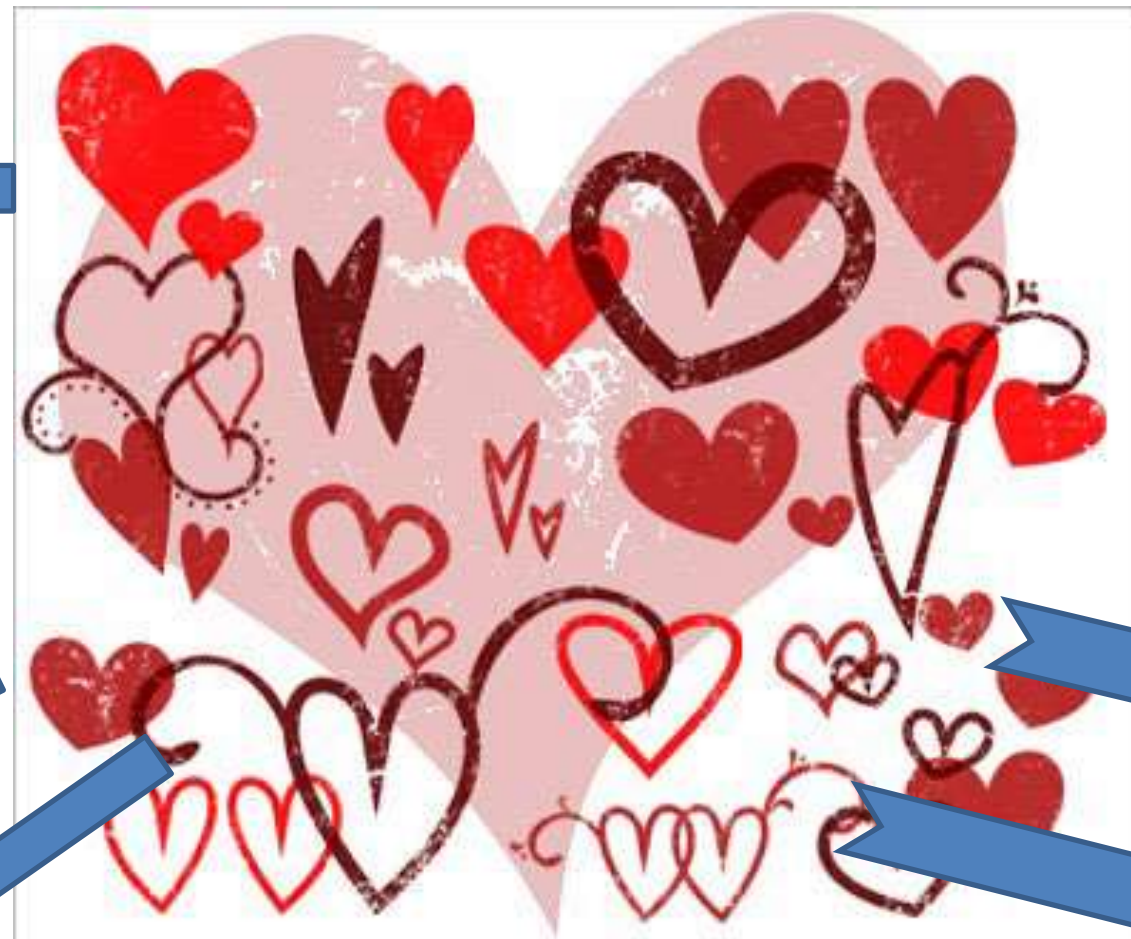
You have 4 minutes.

Imagery

Identify and discuss the imagery used by Shakespeare in this poem. What words and phrases are used to describe love? Why has Shakespeare used this imagery to describe



“Tempests” are violent and windy storms. This suggests that love is challenging.



“wandering bark”

Extension task : Identify the language and structural devices used in the presentation of these images.

GROUPS

**You believe that
the poem
presents a
universal
concept of love.**

A

Feedback in
2 minutes

B

FEELINGS



Red Hat - Feelings

Intuition, hunches, gut instinct.
My feelings right now.
Feelings can change.
No reasons are given.

Find at least one quote to
support your group's opinion.

CAUTIONS



Black Hat - Cautions

Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers.
Logical reasons are given.
Spotting the risks.

Find at least one quote to
support your group's opinion.

2 Minute Timer

B

**You believe that the poem
presents an illogical concept
of love.**

End

A

**You believe that the poem
presents a universal
concept of love.**

What makes/would make this sonnet 'tragic'?



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The Ruined Maid

Thomas Hardy

1. People in the Victorian era did not talk publicly about sex.
2. Women were supposed to remain virgins until they were married and never have affairs.
3. Women who had sex out of marriage were disowned by society and their family.
4. Hardy disagreed with Victorian attitudes to sex and women.
5. Men were not held to the same standards in society as women.
6. 'The Ruined Maid' was published in 1901 even though it was written in 1866.
7. Virgins or 'chaste' women were known as 'maids'.
8. Men were disowned if they had sex outside of marriage.
9. Women were considered equal to men in society.
10. Hardy agreed with society's attitudes towards women and sex.
11. A woman who had sex outside of marriage was known in society as a fallen woman.
12. Life in the Victorian era was easy for most working-class women because they lived in the picturesque countryside.

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10. Hardy agreed with society's attitudes towards women and sex. **F**
11. A woman who had sex outside of marriage was known in society as a fallen woman. **T**
12. Life in the Victorian era was easy for most working-class women because they lived in the picturesque countryside. **F**

Prostitution in Victorian England

- Although we may think of Victorian England as very strict and moral there was probably just as much behaviour that would still be considered shocking then as there is now, if not more.
- Drug taking, violent crime, prostitution, adultery and pornography all went on but were hidden under a more genteel surface leading to hypocrisy and double standards. In Hardy's time, there was also much less equality in England than there is today so there were different expectations and treatment for the poor and the rich, and for men and women.
- In the 19th century (as in some cultures and societies today) there was a double standard whereby it was usually accepted or even expected that men had sex outside marriage but women who did this were called "fallen women" and considered "ruined". They were often shunned by polite society, banished from their families, or worse, left without support, money or connections.
- Opportunities, rights and support for women were so limited that many poor women felt they had no option but to turn to prostitution to make enough money to live. However, there wasn't usually much sympathy or understanding for their circumstances. Prostitution was seen as a big problem, not only as a nuisance in society, but as a threat to morality.
- Although prostitution was not spoken about in polite society, prostitutes and adulterous and otherwise "fallen" women were popular subjects for Victorian art and literature. This sort of art and literature often conveyed a message or lesson which aimed to reinforce Victorian values and warn against sexual temptation.

Images of a 'fallen woman'

The three paintings on the following pages entitled
Past and Present by Augustus Egg (1858) tell a
story of a woman who has been unfaithful to her
husband, with disastrous consequences for herself
and her family.







Questions to answer

- 1. What might be in the letter the husband is reading in the first painting?
- 2. What do you think is the symbolism (the meaning or significance) of:
 - ☐ the woman's fall in the first painting
 - ☐ the house of cards being built by the children
 - ☐ the open door reflected in the mirror?
- 3. What is the effect of the facial expression of the child looking towards us in the first painting?
- 4. What is the difference in mood between the first and the last two paintings?
- 5. What do you think the two girls are thinking about in the second painting?
- 6. Look carefully at the moon in the second two paintings. What does it tell us about when the scenes take place?
- 7. What do you think is the significance of the fragmented words in the last painting? And what is the woman holding?
- 8. What do you think of the way the woman is represented? For example, do you think the linking of the paintings make it seem as if the woman's unfaithfulness led to her fate?

- Considering what you now know about how “fallen women” were usually represented in the literature and art of the time, decide which of the descriptions below you think will apply to ‘Melia as she is now – a “ruined maid”, and which might apply to a farm girl. Write them into the correct ‘girl’. Look up any unfamiliar words.

Explore the language used by Hardy to present each of the women in the poem – write quotes from the poem inside the shapes of the women'



What kind of life does 'Melia' have?



What kind of life does the country girl have?

"in tatters"
"such prosperi-ty"
"tired"
"hands like paws"
"face blue and bleak"
"lively"
"gay bracelets"
"talking quite fits 'ee for high company"
"fair garments"
"without shoes or socks"
"polish"
"little gloves fit as on any la-dy"
"delicate cheek"
"melancholy"
"said 'thee' and 'thou'"
"sigh"

| 'Melia a ruined maid | 'Melia as a country girl |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | |
| | |
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Which statement do you agree with the most and why?

1. The girls' lives are equally as bad
2. Hardy is suggesting that the girls are both unhappy
3. The country girl is jealous of 'Melia
4. Men use both girls
5. 'Melia's life hasn't really improved
6. The country girl will probably end up just like 'Melia.

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