SONNET FORM

March 23, 2020

Sonnet Form

■ 14-line poem

■ Typically written in **iambic pentameter**

■ Has a variable rhyme scheme

■ Traditionally reflects upon a single sentiment, with a clarification or "turn" of thought, known as a **volta**, in its concluding lines

  – *It can be helpful to think of sonnets as making an argument. Thinking about the relationship between the pre-volta lines and the post-volta lines can help you understand what argument a sonnet is making.*

■ Sometimes sonnets deviate from the traditional rhyme scheme or meter

Meter and iambic pentameter

- **Meter:** the rhythmical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in verse

- **Iambic pentameter:** a metrical pattern wherein a line consists of five **feet** (or groups of syllables) featuring one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable

  - *da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM*

  - *who TOLD me TIME would EASE me OF my PAIN*

- **Foot:** the basic unit of measurement of accentual-syllabic meter. A foot usually contains one stressed syllable and at least one unstressed syllable

Petrarchan (or Italian) Sonnet

- Divides the sonnet into an octave (8 lines) and sestet (6 lines)

- Octave rhyme scheme: ABBAABBA

- Sestet rhyme scheme can vary: CDCDCD, CDECDE, CDDCDD, CDDECE, CDDCCD, CDDCEE, CDCDEE

- Volta occurs between the octave and sestet

Shakespearean (or English) Sonnet

- Divides the sonnet into three quatrains and a couplet

- Uses the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

- Volta occurs before the final couplet

- **It is possible to have a sonnet that blends Petrarchan and Shakespearean form

"Time does not bring relief; you all have lied"
Edna St. Vincent Millay

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied

Who told me time would ease me of my pain!

I miss him in the weeping of the rain;

I want him at the shrinking of the tide;

The old snows melt from every mountain-side,

And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;

But last year's bitter loving must remain

Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.

There are a hundred places where I fear

To go,—so with his memory they brim.

And entering with relief some quiet place

Where never fell his foot or shone his face

I say, "There is no memory of him here!"

And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

"Time does not bring relief; you all have lied"
Edna St. Vincent Millay

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied	A
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!	B
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;	B
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;	A
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,	A
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;	B
But last year's bitter loving must remain	B
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.	A
There are a hundred places where I fear	C
To go,—so with his memory they brim.	D
And entering with relief some quiet place	E
Where never fell his foot or shone his face	E
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"	C
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.	D

"Time does not bring relief; you all have lied"
Edna St. Vincent Millay

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied   (10)

Who told me time would ease me of my pain!   (10)

I miss him in the weeping of the rain;   (10)

I want him at the shrinking of the tide;   (10)

The old snows melt from every mountain-side,   (10)

And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;   (10)

But last year's bitter loving must remain   (10)

Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.   (10)

There are a hundred places where I fear   (10)

To go,—so with his memory they brim.   (10)

And ent'ring with relief some quiet place   (10)

Where never fell his foot or shone his face   (10)

I say, "There is no mem'ry of him here!"   (10)

And so stand stricken, so rememb'ring him.   (10)