Shakespeare’s Sonnet VII

Instructions:

1. Read the following poem entitled Shakespeare’s Sonnet VII and read the explanation after it as well.

<http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/sonnet/7>

1. You will need to know what rhyme scheme means: To identify rhyme scheme, assign a letter of the alphabet to each rhymed sound at the end of a line. If that sound is repeated later on in the poem, that line receives the same letter. For an example look below.
2. You need to answer the questions below using evidence from the text to support each of your answers.
3. Poem

Shakespeare’s Sonnet VII

*Lo! in the orient when the gracious light*  
*Lifts up his burning head, each under eye*  
*Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,*  
*Serving with looks his sacred majesty;*   
*And having climbed the steep-up heavenly hill,*  
*Resembling strong youth in his middle age,*  
*Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,*  
*Attending on his golden pilgrimage:*  
*But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,*  
*Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,*  
*The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are*  
*From his low tract, and look another way:*  
   *So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon*  
   *Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son.*

1. Poem Explanation

The poet explores another theme, different from those he has pursued in the preceding sonnets. He draws a simile between the rising and setting sun and youth and age. In the sunset of his days the youth will no longer be surrounded by admirers. Unless he has children to carry on the line and reflect his former beauty, he will vanish unknown into the murky depths of time.

When the sun rises, everyone admires it, and pays homage to it, as if it were a king. As it climbs higher in the sky to reach its zenith, mortals admire it still. But as it plunges downwards towards evening, the gaze is averted, and, like 'unregarded age in corners thrown', it is ignored and other rising stars take precedence. 'So you too, fair youth, will be nothing as you age, unless you become the rising sun by having a son.'

**The 1609 Quarto Version**

LOe in the Orient when the gracious light,   
Lifts vp his burning head,each vnder eye   
Doth homage to his new appearing ſight,   
Seruing with lookes his ſacred maieſty,   
And hauing climb'd the ſteepe vp heauenly hill,   
Reſembling ſtrong youth in his middle age,   
Yet mortall lookes adore his beauty ſtill,   
Attending on his goulden pilgrimage:   
But when from high-moſt pich with wery car,   
Like feeble age he reeleth from the day,   
The eyes(fore dutious )now conuerted are   
From his low tract and looke an other way:   
   So thou,thy ſelfe out-going in thy noon:   
   Vnlok'd on dieſt vnleſſe thou get a ſonne.

**Commentary**

*1. Lo! in the orient when the gracious light*

*the orient* = the east;   
*the gracious light* = the sun. The Eastern lands are also suggested, where, in places, the sun was worshipped. The sun is considered kingly among the heavenly bodies in the old Ptolemaic astronomy. *gracious* = noble, glorious, kind etc.

*2. Lifts up his burning head, each under eye*

*his burning head* - In Greek mythology Helios, the sun god, would be depicted with a flaming head.  
*each under eye* = each dweller on earth, under the sun. But from what follows it is clear that the reference is also to inferior beings in the social scale, those who gaze in awe on kings.

*3. Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,*

*Doth homage to* = pays homage to, worships, bows down, as humans do figuratively before the sun, lest they be dazzled by it. *new-appearing*: the sun could be considered to be new each day. Cf:

*For as the sun is daily new and old* 76.

*4. Serving with looks his sacred majesty;*

Showing, by their looks, how much they respect him; averting their gaze out of respect for his majesty.

*5. And having climbed the steep-up heavenly hill,*

The chariot of the sun, driven by Phoebus in Greek mythology, climbs up the steep slope of the sky.   
*steep-up* = inclined steeply upwards.

*6. Resembling strong youth in his middle age,*

If *his* refers to the sun, the meaning is that the sun, in his middle path, resembles a strong youth. If *his* refers to youth, then it would mean that the sun at its zenith is like a strong youth who has attained the prime (middle) of his youth. Since the entire extended simile is that of the sun growing from youth to age, the focus shifts continuously between the youth, who is also growing old, and the sun itself, and both meanings are simultaneously possible.

*7. Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,*

*mortal looks* = the looks of mortals, also looks which are mortal. The eyes of mortals do not all at once abandon the sacred majesty of the sun, but wait for surer signs of his decline.

*8. Attending on his golden pilgrimage:*

*Attending* signifies performing the duties of an attendant or servant. *pilgrimage* = any long journey, but especially one undertaken to a religious shrine. The epithet *golden* is applied to the sun, but would be appropriate also to describe the royal progress (journey) of a monarch.

*9. But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,*

*highmost pitch =* topmost point, zenith. But *pitch* also threatens an ensuing downfall. Technically it was a term applied to the flight of a hawk or falcon.   
*weary car* = weary chariot of the sun (in practice the horses which pulled it would be weary, having climbed the steep up heavenly hill). For a classical depiction of the sun's chariot see illustration below. The horses of the sun are also featured in the Elgin marbles from the Parthenon.

*10. Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,*

The image is that of old age stumbling and falling. Of course the sun, being the day, or daylight, cannot exactly reel from himself. But the chariot of the sun now starts to fall away from its high point, and reels away from the zenith. The image is almost that of the daylight staggering away from its own brightness.

*11. The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are*

*'fore* = before. The eyes, in the former state of affairs, showed their obedience and adulation.   
*now converted are* = now are turned away, averted. *To convert* did not then have the predominant meaning of 'to cause someone to change faith'.

*12. From his low tract, and look another way:*

*his* refers again to the sun.   
*tract* = pathway, track. The sun is now low in the sky, ready to plunge once more beneath the horizon.

*13. So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon*

*So thou* = you, my beloved, the fair youth; *outgoing* = extinguishing or being extinguished, or excelling yourself; or beginning to decline after you have reached the zenith of your powers. *noon* was also a euphemism for sexual arousal.

*14. Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son.*

*Unlooked on diest* = You and your race will die out unmarked and unnoticed. *To die* also meant to experience orgasm, so the implication is that he is wasting his life in solitary (*unlooked on)* masturbation. He should be directing his energies towards begetting a son.   
*get =* beget. *son* It is thought that a pun on *sun* is intended.

Shakespeare, William. “Shakespeare’s Sonnet VII.” Oxquarry Books Ltd, 2011. <http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/sonnet/7>.

1. Rhyme Scheme explanation and example
   1. Rhyme scheme should be abab cdcd efef gg
      1. To identify rhyme scheme, assign a letter of the alphabet to each rhymed sound at the end of a line. If that sound is repeated later on in the poem, that line receives the same letter.

Sometimes I eat light (a)

But sometimes I like it sweet (b)

I think I just might (a)

Eat some when we meet. (b)

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| Shakespearean Sonnet XXVII (27) Poem   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed, A The dear repose for limbs with travel tired; B  But then begins a journey in my head A  To work my mind, when body's work's expired: B |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | For then my thoughts--from far where I abide-- Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee, D And keep my drooping eyelids open wide, C Looking on darkness which the blind do see: D | C |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Save that my soul's imaginary sight E Presents thy shadow to my sightless view, F  Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night, E Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new. F |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Lo! thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,  For thee, and for myself, no quiet find. G | G | *.* |   Covert, Brenda B. “English Sonnet.” Nov. 18, 2011. <http://edhelper.com/ReadingComprehension_31_15.html>: 1. |

1. Questions that need to be answered based on Shakespearean Sonnet and rhyme scheme

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| Questions |
| 1.What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  2. Does each line have 10 syllables? Rewrite one of the lines and break up the syllables as proof that there are 10 syllables.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  3. What is the main idea and conclusion of this poem? Use examples from the text to explain your meaning.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  4. Explain the main simile that runs throughout the entire poem. Use examples from the text to explain your meaning. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  5. Shakespeare is trying to tell this youth to have children. It is obviously important to him because he writes several poems on the same topic. Why do you think that Shakespeare used such a formal type of writing like the sonnet to convince this youth of the importance of children? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  6. Summarize the message of the poem in your own words. Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  7. Take the poem into chunks: 3 stanzas (4 lines) and one rhyming couplet (last two lines that rhyme). Explain the major units of thought for each of the stanzas and explain the conclusion in the last two lines.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |