Shakespeare – Summaries and Quotes

* Sonnet 12 – “When I do count the clock that tells the time”
* Sonnet 18 – “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”
* Sonnet 23 – “As an unperfect actor on the stage”
* Sonnet 30 – “When to the sessions of sweet silent thought”
* Sonnet 60 – “Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore”
* Sonnet 73 – “That time of year thou mayst in me behold”
* Sonnet 116 – “Let me not to the marriage of true minds”

**Group 1** – 12, 18, 60: youth and beauty are considered in relation to the destructive forces of time. The speaker seeks some way to circumvent the ravages of time.

**Group 2** – 23, 30, 73, 116: the speaker comments on how the love of the young man to whom the poems are addressed is compensation for the trials of everyday life

\*\*Metaphors are used extensively throughout the sonnets. Your essay should refer to this, with examples!\*\*

**Sonnet 12 – “When I do count the clock that tells the time”**

Summary

* Speaker considers how time damages and destroys all things in nature
* Realises that the beauty of his love will also be destroyed
* Suggests that having children is the only way to defy time

Quotes

* When I do count the clock that tells the time
* Sable curls all silvered o’re with white
* And summer’s green all girded up in sheaves borne on the bier with white and bristly beard
* Thou among the wastes of time must go
* Breed to brave him

**Sonnet 18 – “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”**

Summary

* Speaker considers comparing his lover to a summer’s day, but decides that his lover is far superior
* Feels that his lover’s beauty and fairness can never fade while this poem lives as a reminder

Quotes

* Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
* Thou art more lovely and more temperate
* Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines
* Thy eternal summer shall not fade#
* Nor shall death brag thou wander’st in his shade / When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st
* So long as men can breathe , or eyes can see / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee

**Sonnet 23 – “As an unperfect actor on the stage”**

Summary

* The speaker compares himself to a bad actor who doesn’t know his lines as he always finds himself tongue-tied around his lover and unable to say what he feels
* Instead, he captures his feelings in verse

Quotes

* As an unperfect actor on the stage / who with his fear is put besides his part
* So I, for fear of trust, forget to say / The perfect ceremony of love’s right
* O let my books be then the eloquence
* O learn to read what silent love hath writ

**Sonnet 30 – “When to the sessions of sweet silent thought”**

Summary

* When the speaker is depressed or saddened by thinking of past sorrows and losses, thinking about his love can lighten his mood and dispel his sadness

Quotes

* When to the sessions of sweet silent thought / I summon up remembrance of things past
* I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought
* And weep afresh love’s long since cancelled woe
* But if the while I think on thee, dear friend / All losses are restored, and sorrows end

**Sonnet 60 – “Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore”**

Summary

* Speaker contemplates how time will eventually destroy youth and beauty
* His hope is that this verse will immortalise his lover

Quotes

* Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore / So do our minutes hasten to their end
* Nativity, once in the main of light, / Crawls to maturity
* Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth / And delves the parallels in beauty’s brow
* And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand / Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand

**Sonnet 73 – “That time of year thou mayst in me behold”**

Summary

* Speaker is aware that his younger lover may be particularly aware of the speaker’s advanced years, but argues that this should make the lover love the speaker even more, as he will not have him for much longer

Quotes

* When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang / Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
* Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang
* In me thou seest the twilight of such day
* Consumed with that which it was nourished by
* Which makes thy love strong / To love that well, which thou must leave ere long

**Sonnet 116 – “Let me not to the marriage of true minds”**

Summary

* The speaker sets out a series of definitions of love by describing what it is, but also what it is not
* In the concluding rhyming couplet, the speakers is confident enough in his definition to argue that if he hasn’t accurately defined love, then no one has ever loved

Quotes

* Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments
* Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds
* It is an ever-fixed mark / That looks on tempests and is never shaken
* Love’s not time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks / Within his bending sickle’s compass come
* If this be error, and up on me proved, / I never writ, nor no man ever loved