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Immortality in Verse: An Analysis of Sonnet 81

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Immortality in Verse An Analysis of Sonnet 81

UtahStateUniversity

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Savannah Lund, Brooke Tingey, Clay Reed, Tambi Clark, and Sadie Leonhardt

Here, the Poet introduces

body imagery, which is

common across many of

the other sonnets. Words

like tongue and breathers

bring to mind language

tone becomes slightly

more hopeful as well.

The couplet combines

the imagery of life and

triumphant as the poet

describes the successful

immortalization of the

beloved in verse.

breath. The tone becomes

and the spoken word. The

A Guide to Analyzing

Shakespeare's sonnets are like language puzzles. Each one is packed with so much rich detail and complex ideas, it can be difficult to see how the pieces fit together. This poster acts as a guide to analyzing Shakespeare's sonnets and gives an example of a brief analysis with the focus on the themes of death and immortality. To analyze:

- Read sonnet at least twice (preferably out loud)
- Analyze by quatrain and final couplet
- Identify figurative language
- Identify the volta (shift in tone)
- Interpret overall theme



"Death Surprising a Young Couple" by Jan van de Velde (II), c. 1610 - c. 1650.

Sonnet 81 Or I shall <mark>live</mark> your epitaph to make The first quatrain uses imagery related to life and Or you survive when I in earth am rotten. death. The images and word choices here convey a First Quatrain tone of finality and maybe some bitterness on the part From hence your memory death cannot take, of the Poet. Although in me each part will be forgotten. _ Your name from hence immortal life shall have, The second quatrain continues the pattern of Though I, once gone, to all the world must die. life and death imagery. The imagery of death is Second Quatrain reinforced here by use of words like grave and The earth can yield me but a common grave, entombed. When you entombèd in men's eyes shall lie. _

Your monument shall be my gentle verse,

Which eyes not yet created shall o'erread;

And tongues to be your being shall rehearse

When all the breathers of this world are dead.

You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen—

Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

Third Quatrain

Couplet

Death and Immortality

- The speaker of the poem is jealous of his beloved because, while he will be buried in the ground and forgotten in the coming years, his beloved will go on to live in immortality.
- The beloved can only achieve this through the words of the poet.
- The speaker will soon be forgotten, but his beloved will always be remembered

The Body

- Imagery of the body is a common theme in Shakespeare's sonnets.
- This poem is talking about how the beloved is immortalized by the speaking of Shakespeare's verse in the future.
- We get images of tongues, mouths, and breath which represent the poem being spoken and viewed by the eyes of people in the future.

Irony

This sonnet discusses the speaker's fear that he will be forgotten, and the beloved will be remembered. There is irony in how Shakespeare sees the future. He mentions that the beloved's name will have "immortal life," although the name is never mentioned and the inspiration for the beloved is unknown. Shakespeare is well-known, and the beloved has been forgotten.



"Saint Jerome Writing" by Hans Springinklee, 1522