

Name:

# Shakespeare: Knowledge Booklet



## Vocabulary List

Elizabethan

Tragedy

Comedy

History

The Globe

Groundlings

Social advantage

Patriarchy

Sonnet

Octave

Sestet

Quatrain

Rhyming Couplet

Volta

Iambic Pentameter

Hyperbole

Conflict

Resolution

Reality

Illusion

Artisan

Task:

Copy the key words into your classbook – as you work your way through the booklet you should write detailed definitions for each

**LO: To explore the context of *Romeo & Juliet***

## **Context- Shakespeare's England**

Shakespeare belonged to one of the most successful acting groups in London: The Lord Chamberlain's Men. In 1599, members of this group were involved in building their own theatre in the south of London, which they called **The Globe**. It could hold up to 3000 people.

The theatre attracted people from all classes: the upper class nobility and the lower class Commoners. The nobility would have had seats, sometimes even cushioned ones, but the Commoners, called the **Groundlings**, would have stood in the theatre pit and paid 1 penny entrance fee. They put 1 penny in a box at the theatre entrance - hence the term 'Box Office'.

Flags were put up on the day of the performance which sometimes displayed a picture advertising the next play to be performed. Colour coding was used to advertise the type of play to be performed - a black flag meant a **tragedy**, white a **comedy** and red a **history**.

Respectable London citizens objected to the theatre because of the rise in crime, the rude nature of some of the plays, fighting, and drinking, not to mention the risk of so many people and the spread of the Bubonic Plague! This caused some temporary closures to the theatres.

Theatre performances were held in the afternoon, because there was no artificial lighting. Women attended plays but no women performed in the plays. Female roles were generally performed by young boys. The actors' clothes were all handmade and were dyed using natural materials. The make-up used was, and still is, applied with sheep's wool.

Shakespeare entertained the people at The Globe until June 19, 1613, when a canon fired from the roof of the theatre for a gala performance of Henry VIII set fire to the thatch roof and burned the theatre to the ground. The audience ignored the smoke from the roof at first, being too absorbed in the play, until the flames caught the walls and the fabric of the curtains. Amazingly there were no casualties, and the next spring the company had rebuilt the theatre.

In 1592, plays at the Globe Theatre started at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. All the plays took place during the day because electricity had not been discovered. People used to travel to the theatre by boat or walk across London Bridge. As they approached the Globe Theatre, they used to pass pits where bear baiting and cockfighting took place. Not only were people mad for the violent things they could see on their way there, but they also went to see the newest plays and stare at their favourite actors

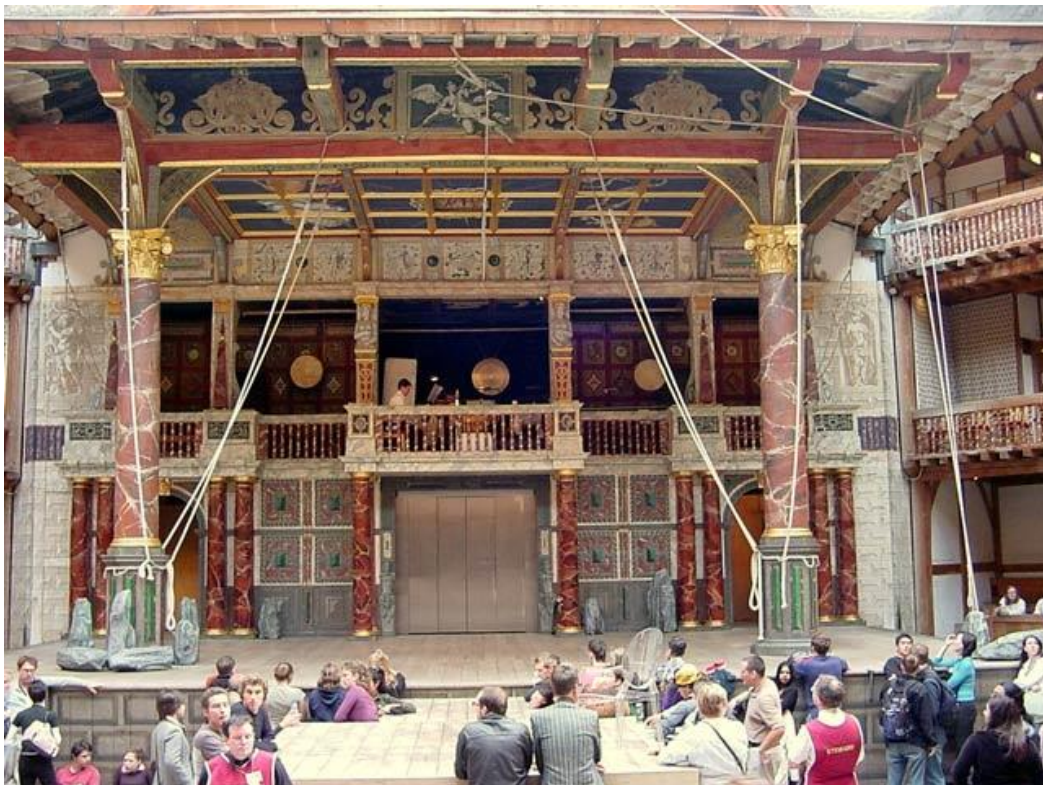
When you entered the building, you saw the stage in front of you. Two pillars on the stage supported the roof, which covered the actors. This was the 'Heavens' and it was painted with stars, a sun and a moon. At the back of the stage was the musicians' gallery who created music and sound effects.

At the top were the galleries where merchants used to sit. Their seats cost between 2-6 pence. There were also "Gentlemen's Rooms" or boxes for rich and famous people and these cost a shilling. Finally, the poor stood in the 'pit' right by the stage and were called 'groundlings'. These seats cost 1 penny.

The audience used to make lots of noise during the performances – more like the crowd at a football match! If they didn't like a performance they would heckle and throw things at the actors. People used to walk through the audience selling food and drink. There were lots of people in the theatre who didn't wash very often and they used to have open buckets for toilets.

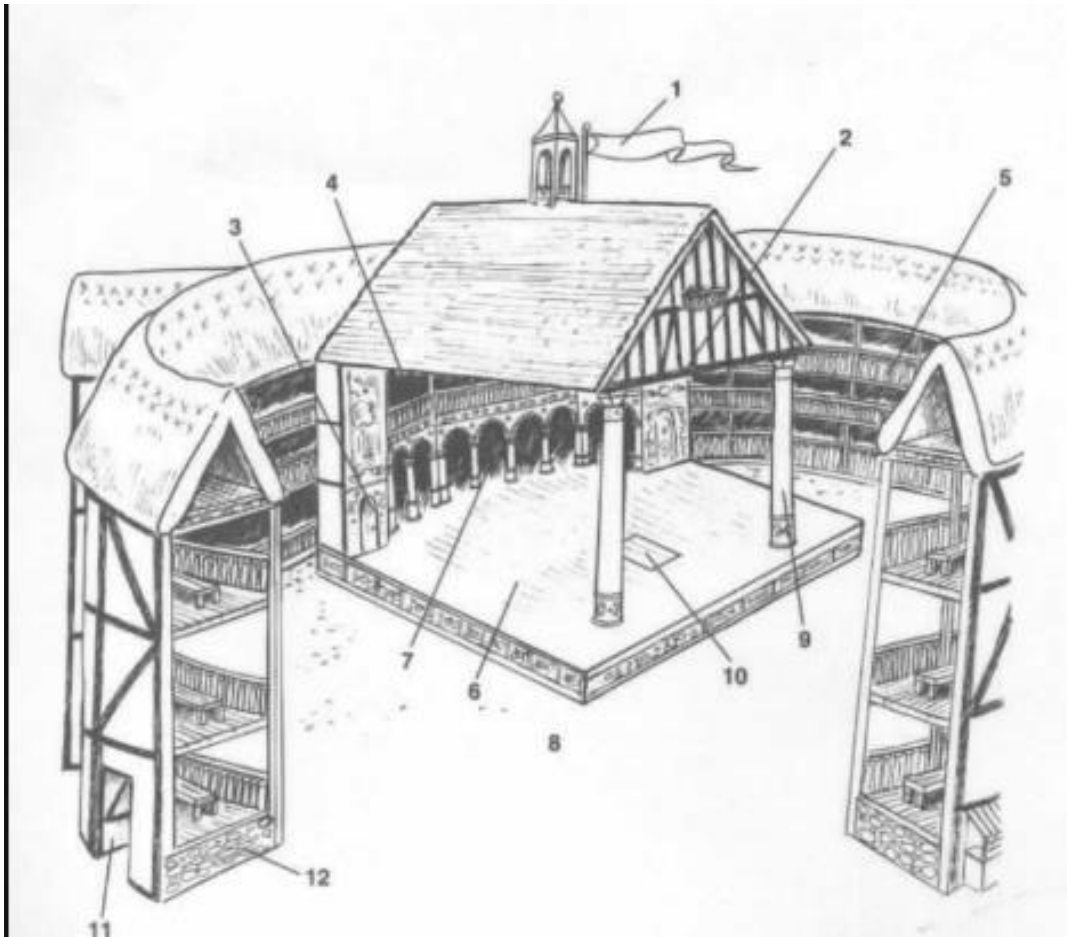
**Task: Answer in full sentences**

- 1. When was the Globe built?**
- 2. How many people could it seat?**
- 3. What were the Commoners called?**
- 4. What did a white flag mean?**
- 5. Why were the theatres closed?**
- 6. Who played the role of women and why?**
- 7. What happened in 1613?**
- 8. How many casualties were there?**



**Task:**

**Here is a picture of the rebuilt Globe theatre on Bankside in London. What are the main differences between this theatre and a modern indoor theatre? What benefits do you think a theatre like this has?**



**Task:**

**Copy this picture of the Globe theatre into your book. Use the notes below to label each part of the theatre building. Summarise the information given and include the relevant info in your labels.**

1. **Flag**—signified which type of play was being performed—black for tragedy, white for comedy, and red for history. The flag was flown high enough so most of London could see it waving from the top of the Globe. This was important because the theatre was located on the outskirts of the city across the Thames River.
2. **The "Heavens"**—ceiling over the stage that protected the actors from too much sun or rain. It also represented the sky and heavens and was painted blue with golden stars. Actors who played angels or spirits descended from the hut on top of this "roof" to the main stage. The hut was also used for storage and additional sound effects such as alarm bells, cannon fire, and thunder.
3. **Tiring House**—dressing and storage rooms. Actors rested here between scenes and changed into lavish costumes. All large props were stored here. The doors to the tiring house also served as actors' main entrances and exits.
4. **Upper Stage**—this "chamber" was used for most bedroom and balcony scenes.
5. **Galleries**—three covered seating sections. Audiences paid more to sit on these tiered wooden benches under a thatched roof to keep out the sun and rain. For an additional penny, a patron could borrow a cushion to sit on.
6. **Main Stage**—where the main action of the play took place, especially outdoor scenes of battlefields, forests, or cityscapes. It was often called an "apron" stage because audiences could sit around all three sides. The stage was intentionally built four to five feet high so the audience could not jump up and into the action. For a larger fee, patrons could sometimes sit up on the stage next to the actors.
7. **Inner Stage**—this stage was used mostly for indoor scenes. It had a curtain that could be opened or closed for scene changes.
8. **Open Yard**—audiences paid one penny to stand here and watch the performance, rain or shine. Often these patrons, or groundlings, would participate in the play by cheering, shouting, or throwing snacks at the actors.
9. **Support Pillars**—these wooden pillars supported the roof and were painted to look like marble. Actors used these pillars to hide on the main stage and observe other characters while speaking in "asides" to the audience.
10. **Trap Door**—actors playing ghosts or witches could rise or descend through this door built into the main stage. The cellarage underneath was referred to as "hell."
11. **Entrance**—"gatherers" stood at the single entrance to collect one penny from each patron per performance. Patrons put their pennies into a box, hence the term "box office." It took audiences at least half an hour to file into the theatre.
12. **Brick Foundation**—the Globe's foundation needed to be constructed of brick, as it was built on wet, marshy land close to the Thames River.

## A VISIT TO THE THEATRE IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME



Imagine you are living in 1592, Shakespeare's time, and you are going to the theatre. You set off at lunchtime. All plays take place during the day because electricity has not been discovered yet. You may arrive at the theatre by boat across the River Thames, but you can save your ferry fare and walk across London Bridge. As you approach the Globe Theatre you pass the pits where bear baiting and cockfighting take place. A flag is flying from the roof which means that there is a performance today. People are crazy for the theatre, flocking to see the latest plays and ogle at their favourite actors. Anyone and everyone goes to the theatre in London. About 21,000 Londoners go to the theatre every week. That's over a tenth of the city's population – so it could be a fairly busy journey!

The play begins at 2 o'clock sharp and in order to hurry people along a loud shot is heard from a tower. Performances always take place at the same time on every day of the week except Sunday and during Lent. The theatres were also shut from October to April because the audience is not fully protected from the weather and people do not want to watch plays in the freezing cold.

You enter the building and see the stage in front of you. Two pillars on the stage support a roof for the actors. This is called the 'Heavens' and is painted with stars, a sun and a moon. At the back of the stage is the musicians' gallery. Musicians with trumpets, drums and other instruments play tunes and make sound effects. As you look around at the audience you will see lots of different types of people. At the top of the building there are galleries where merchants, sea-captains and clerks sit. They have paid between 2-6 pence for their seats. There are 'Gentlemen's Rooms' or boxes for rich and famous people and these cost a shilling. Finally the lower class citizens, or servants and apprentices, are standing in the yard or 'pit' in front of the stage and are known as 'groundlings.' They have only had to pay a penny. It's not always fun for the people standing in the 'pit' because sometimes a play can last four hours!

Once the trumpet has sounded and the audience is in their correct places the play will commence. The actors will have been rehearsing all morning and usually have to learn eight hundred words a day. They also have a double up parts, design sets, produce special effects, sell tickets and refreshments and prompt the actors on stage. By the end of the day they must be exhausted. Don't be surprised when the actors playing the female parts are not women. Instead young men dressed up as women play these parts. Women are not allowed to act in 1592 because it is considered shameless and unladylike.

The audience make a lot of noise during performances – more like spectators at a modern football match than a visit to see a play – cheering, hissing, clapping, booing and crying. You can tell if they do not like the performance as they will heckle and if they enjoy it they might start to sing along to any songs. Pedlars, or street sellers, go amongst the crowd selling food and drink to anyone who is hungry or who simply wants to throw something at the actors. It's a very smelly place. You may be able to detect the smell of sweaty, dirty bodies, food and also the open buckets that are used as toilets!

So sit down and enjoy the show, but remember to keep a lookout for pickpockets as they also have a good time at the theatre!



### TASK: COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

Read through the questions below carefully. Write your answers in full sentences in your book.



1. Why did all the plays take place during daylight hours?
2. What time exactly did the performances begin?
3. How did people know when to hurry to the theatre because the performance was about to begin?
4. In which two ways did people travel to the theatre?
5. What sort of activities might they pass on the way to the theatre?
6. What did it mean when the flag was flying on top of the theatre?
7. How many people visited the theatre in one week in London in 1592?
8. When were the theatres closed?
9. Why, do you think, stars, a sun and a moon were painted on the roof above the stage?
10. Who made the sound effects for the performance?
11. Who sat in the 'Gentlemen's Rooms' or boxes?
12. How much did the tickets cost for these seats?
13. How much did people pay to stand in the 'pit' in front of the stage?
14. Name five jobs that an actor may have done for the theatre group.
15. Why weren't women allowed to act at this time?
16. What did pedlars sell during the performance?
17. What might the audience do during the performance?
18. Why did the theatre often smell unpleasant?
19. Who, other than the audience, enjoyed visiting the theatre and why?
20. Using the information from the sheet, and your imagination, describe a day at the theatre as if you are one of the following: (a) an actor (b) someone in the audience (c) a pedlar (d) a pickpocket. **Remember** this should be written in the first person and using the past tense.





Lo: To imagine a visit to the Globe from the perspective of an Elizabethan theatre-goer

**Task:** Read 'An interview with Thomas Platter' below. Use the information provided by Thomas to write a letter from him to a friend where he describes his recent visit to the Globe theatre. REMEMBER to use varied sentences, imaginative vocab and descriptive language techniques.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS PLATTER

**Interviewer:** Hello and welcome to Talk of the Times. Today we will be interviewing Mr. Thomas Platter, an ordinary Elizabethan playgoer, one of the thousands that flocked to the theatres that sprung up around the City of London, particularly the Southbank. Good afternoon, Mr. Platter. It's extremely good of you to ...

**Thomas:** Now before you begin, I want to say that you mustn't ask me any difficult questions. I'm not an expert and my memory's not as good as it used to be.

**Interviewer:** Don't worry Mr. Platter. We'll start with an easy one. What time did performances begin at The Globe?

**Thomas:** About two o'clock. Dinner and a pot of ale, then to The Globe - that is, if the flag was flying. If it wasn't it meant bad weather had prevented the performance.

**Interviewer:** Wasn't there a roof on the theatre?

**Thomas:** Well, The Globe was an eight-sided building with a little sloping thatched roof round the edges and the centre open to the sky.

**Interviewer:** And when it rained, the audience got wet?

**Thomas:** Not quite! Only those in the belly of the theatre got wet. The belly was the ground or yard in front of the stage and the people who stood there were known as groundlings. They got wet because there was no roof over this part. But surrounding the yard, forming the walls of the theatre, there were three circular galleries, the top one covered by the thatched roof. It was a penny extra to get into the galleries.

**Interviewer:** Was it worth paying extra?

**Thomas:** It certainly was! The groundlings were a rough old lot, and besides, it was hard on your feet, standing that long. In the galleries you got a seat and a cushion if you paid extra.

**Interviewer:** Right Thomas. Imagine you are in the theatre. Could you please describe what you would see from a gallery seat.?

**Thomas:** First, you can see the front part of the stage thrusting out into the yard, with the audience standing on three sides. At the back of the stage there is a curtained alcove called the 'tiring house' -

**Interviewer:** What we would call a dressing room -

**Thomas:** - and on the other side of the tiring house there are doors and exits through which the actors make their exits and entrances. Above the tiring house is the gallery for the musicians and for the rich young men who want to show off their feathered hats and fine clothes. Some of them buy stools for sixpence and sit on the stage itself. They are a real nuisance because they interrupt the actors in their speeches, chat and wander around if they get bored!

**Interviewer:** What is there above the gallery?

**Thomas:** Above the gallery is the hut - like a tiny house popping its head over the walls of the theatre. Here is kept the suspension gear used for flying effects, and here the flag is hoisted to announce the performance.

**Interviewer:** Was the stage covered or did the actors get wet if it rained?

**Thomas:** It depended where they stood. You see, two columns rise from the stage and support a canopy over the rear part of the stage in front of the tiring house, but the front part is open to the sky. If an actor stood there he got wet or ran for cover!

**Interviewer:** It was an adaptable stage, then. The actors could perform on the front of the stage, or under the canopy between the pillars, or in the alcove, or from the balcony.

**Thomas:** Or they could come up through the trapdoor in the centre of the stage - a favourite entrance for ghosts!

**Interviewer:** Why do you think Shakespeare's plays were, and remain, so popular?

**Thomas:** There were plays to suit every taste - histories, tragedies, romance, and sometimes a mixture of all three. Some went to see the murders, the swordfights, the battles and the deaths. Some liked the magical effects of the monsters and ghosts and witches. I liked them all. I couldn't get enough! The Globe was a merry place - the old Globe, I mean, before it got burned down.

**Interviewer:** Were you in the audience when this happened?

**Thomas:** Yes, I was. It was in 1613, fourteen years after it had been built. The play was 'All is True' - about Henry VIII - not a play by Shakespeare. A canon was fired to signal the entrance of the King. It wasn't a real canon ball, but some paper and a cloth rolled into a ball. But instead of shooting over the theatre roof it landed on the straw thatch above the galleries. The audience were enjoying the play so much that nobody noticed until it was too late. Imagine the panic as the whole theatre was ablaze. Cries of "Fire! Fire!" - and everybody rushed for the exits. It was a miracle that no one was hurt, except one man who had his breeches set on fire and had to put it out with a pint of ale!

**Interviewer:** So that was the end of The Globe.

**Thomas:** Not quite the end. Within a year the actors had raised enough money to build a new Globe theatre, far more splendid than the first.

**Interviewer:** And four centuries on it has once again been rebuilt for

audiences to go and see many of the plays written by Shakespeare. Thank you Thomas for talking to us today.

**LO: To explore the presentation of gender and expectations for men and women in Shakespeare's time**

## **Context- Role of women and gender expectations**

In the late sixteenth century, when *Romeo & Juliet* was written, the idea of marrying for love in high society as Juliet does in the play was fairly new. People married for all kinds of other reasons – for money or for political or **social advantage**, for example.

Women could marry very young (legally, they could marry from the age of twelve).

The majority of women in late sixteenth century England were uneducated. However, women who came from families of high social standing were taught by personal tutors at home. They would have studied reading, writing and arithmetic, and languages such as Greek, Latin and French. They were also taught sewing and music.

While a woman's place in this world was primarily at home and with her family, some women had jobs as midwives and apothecaries (pharmacists); others were employed in trades as shoemakers, milliners (hat makers) and embroiderers. Women were also washerwomen and servants.

This was a male-dominated society (**a patriarchy**): women in Elizabethan England were of lower status than men. Women were brought up to obey the men in their lives – their fathers, brothers and husbands. They were not allowed to own property once they were married.

Married women had children on average every two years. About half of the babies born died not long afterward. Many women also died in childbirth.

Honour, especially male honour, was very important. The slightest insult to male honour was a very serious business and had to be answered. The result of this code was that public fights were common and often ended in bloodshed and death.

Because of the fights and bloodshed, governments tried very hard to keep public order and rid society of this impulse to row and riot. Punishments for public fights were very severe.

This was a very Christian society and strict obedience to the laws of the Christian faith was expected.

There were many life-threatening dangers in Elizabethan times. Fewer than 50% of children reached the age of five and a high percentage of women died during their first childbirth. Many men were killed in wars and great epidemics of smallpox and the plague killed thousands more. If you were ill, there was little the doctors could do. *'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die'* was a good saying for this period in history.

In Shakespeare's time the class system was very powerful. You knew your place in society and that was dictated by how much money you had, what you did for a living and who your ancestors were. It was very difficult to move from one class to another: marriage was one opportunity to do this. At the very least people made every effort not to move down the social rankings.

In Shakespeare's time there were only about fifty-five noble families in England. These families were very rich and powerful and supported large households of relatives, servants and other associates. You became a nobleman by ancestry or by a grant from the king or queen.

### **Task:**

**Research the life of Emelia Bassano. She was said to be the inspiration for many of Shakespeare's female characters and may have even helped him with his writing. Find out as much about her life as you can and create an info page to show what you have found. Think about how her story highlights the experiences of many women in the C16 and C17.**

LO: To understand and identify the features of the sonnet form

## **Sonnet form**

The sonnet form was first popularised by the Italian Renaissance poet **Petrarch** who wrote a romantic poem in the fourteenth century addressed to an idealised and unattainable woman called Laura.

A traditional **Petrarchan Sonnet** has fourteen lines, divided into the **octave** and the **sestet**, of eight and six lines respectively. There will often be some opposition or tension between the octave and the sestet: sometimes the octave poses a problem or dilemma that the sestet might attempt to answer.

A **Shakespearean sonnet** is written in **iambic pentameter** and comprised of four parts. The first three are made of four lines each called **quatrains**, which rhyme ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, with the final two lines being a rhyming couplet with the rhyme scheme GG.

Often the quatrains establish and develop a sequence of ideas which is then transformed by the time we get to the **rhyming couplet**. The transformation is usually added by a **volta**, or turn in the argument, which the couplet affirms. They are like mini philosophical debates.

**Task:**

**Make a SONNET FORM poster that clearly illustrates and defines the following terms:**

**Octave**

**Sestet**

**Iambic pentameter**

**Quatrains**

**Rhyming couplet**

**Volta**

**LO: To deconstruct Shakespeare's sonnets and compare his use of language**

### **Sonnet 130**

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

#### **Tasks:**

- 1. Read Sonnet 130. Find and label the different features of a sonnet that are listed above**
- 2. Summarise the meaning of the poem in your own words.**
- 3. Use the sentence starters below to write a paragraph to answer the following Q: How does Shakespeare present his ideas about love in Sonnet 130?**

**P** Within Sonnet 116, Shakespeare reveals that he believes love is...

Similarly/Alternatively, in Sonnet 130, Shakespeare suggests that...

**E** In Sonnet 116, Shakespeare uses the (technique) "... " to reinforce the idea that...

Likewise/Also, in Sonnet 130, Shakespeare's use of (technique) "... " highlights that...

**A** This suggests to the reader that Shakespeare believes...

**LO: To deconstruct a Shakespearean sonnet and explore the writer's use of language and structure**

### **Sonnet 73**

The narrator of Sonnet 73 is approaching death and thinking about how different it is from being young. It's like the branch of a tree where birds once sang but the birds have gone and the leaves have fallen, leaving only a few dry yellow leaves. It's like the twilight of a beautiful day, where there is only the black night ahead. It's like the glowing ashes of a fire that once roared. The things that once gave him life have destroyed his life. From that experience he has learnt that one has to love life as strongly as one can because it will end all too soon.

### **Sonnet 73**

That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by-and-by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire  
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.  
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

**Task: Use the PEA sentence starters from the previous task to answer the following Q. You should try to write two paragraphs this time**

**How does Shakespeare present his ideas about getting old in Sonnet 73?**