SONNET 130	PARAPHRASE
My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;	My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;	Coral is far more red than her lips;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;	If snow is white, then her breasts are a brownish gray;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.	If hairs are like wires, hers are black and not golden.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,	I have seen damask roses, red and white [streaked],
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;	But I do not see such colors in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight	And some perfumes give more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.	Than the horrid breath of my mistress.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know	I love to hear her speak, but I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;	That music has a more pleasing sound.
I grant I never saw a goddess go;	I've never seen a goddess walk;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:	But I know that my mistress walks only on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare	And yet I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.	As any woman who has been misrepresented by ridiculous comparisons.

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Sonnet 130 Introduction

In A Nutshell

This sonnet is part of a group of poems by William Shakespeare that scholars think was addressed to someone they call "The Dark Lady." We get little glimpses of her in this poem. Shakespeare talks about her hair, the colour of her skin, etc. Mostly, though, this poem is a gentle parody of traditional love poetry. Shakespeare uses this sonnet to poke fun at the kinds of exaggerated comparisons some poets of his day made when talking about their lovers. He makes fun of clichéd images that were worn out even then, like "eyes like the sun," and "skin as white as snow." These kinds of over-the-top compliments appear everywhere in poems by writers like Petrarch, who wrote famous Italian sonnets in the 14th century. Although no one is sure whether the woman Shakespeare is talking about really existed, readers can see how well he uses this sonnet to skewer lame poetic clichés.

So, when we say the words "love poem," what pops into your head? Maybe you've always thought that a love poem had to be sappy, like something you'd find in a Valentine's Day card. If we told you that the love poem we had in mind was over 400 years old, that might make it even worse, right? Old love poems bring to mind flowery language and the kind of unrealistic glop that you could never bring yourself to say with a straight face.

But, if you think sappy love poems are ridiculous, you're not alone – that's pretty much how Shakespeare felt too, and he spends these fourteen lines ripping that kind of poem apart. Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 is a parody of the kind of insincere, sickly sweet love poems that authors have been writing (and a lot of people have been hating) for centuries. Now, don't get us wrong, we're not anti-love poetry and we can get into the sappy stuff sometimes too. But we're not fans of lame clichés, and we think it's pretty fun to watch Shakespeare go to town on them in this sonnet.

STRUCTURE

Sonnet 130 is an English or Shakespearean sonnet. The English sonnet has three quatrains, followed by a final rhyming couplet. It follows the typical rhyme scheme of the form *abab cdcd efef gg* and is composed in iambic pentameter, a type of poetic metre based on five pairs of metrically weak/strong syllabic positions. The 1st line exemplifies a regular iambic pentameter: