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Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds



William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

ABOUT THE POET

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was one of the greatest poets and dramatists of the English language. Born at Stratford-on-Avon, England, he went to London where his reputation as a dramatist and poet was established. His *Sonnets*, 154 in number, probably written between 1593 and 1598, were published in 1602. The above sonnet is sonnet number 116 in which we have a depiction of true love. His voluminous work includes 37 plays and two narrative poems.



- ☛ The following two common words are used in a different sense in the poem. Guess what they mean

bark

compass

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM

1. 'Constancy' is the theme of the poem. Indicate the words, phrases and images that suggest the theme.
2. Why do you think the poet has used so many 'negatives' to make his statement?
3. What does the line 'I never writ, nor no man ever loved' imply?
4. Love is presented as the subject or doer of actions in the poem. Why do you think the poet has used this form rather than involving human agents?
5. Explain the phrases
 - a. his bending sickle's compass
 - b. Time's fool

TRY THIS OUT

This poem is a Shakespearean sonnet.

1. What do you understand by a sonnet?
2. Look at some other sonnets and notice the variations in the structure of the sonnet that are possible.

SUGGESTED READING

1. "Shall I Compare Thee" by William Shakespeare.

