**Sonnet 18, by William Shakespeare**

**In A Nutshell**
This is the eighteenth poem in William Shakespeare’s huge series of sonnets published in 1609. By that time, Shakespeare was already a hot shot, with his most famous plays behind him. So, over a couple of years, Shakespeare sat down and wrote (get this) 154 of these little poems. All of them are sonnets, but Sonnet 18 is probably the most famous and widely read.

Why? First, it’s the perfect example of the sonnet form, so it’s great for teaching, but it’s also a great point of access for one of the major issues in all of Shakespeare: the weird relationship between an author, his subject matter, and his audience. Shakespeare’s really into messing with how stories are told, and how different kinds of storytelling can affect the content of the stories. He brought his A-game to this sonnet.

Shakespeare's sonnets are considered a treasure trove for trying to understand his personal life. Not much is known about the guy, but scholars have made tons of inferences based largely on these poems. The first seventeen sonnets are thought to be Shakespeare addressing a young man and telling him to go make some babies. The last sonnets are thought to be written to Shakespeare’s mistress, whom scholars awesomely call the "Dark Lady." The middle poems, though, of which Sonnet 18 is the first, are generally thought to be love poems directed at a young man (check out Sonnet 20, where this is more obvious). What’s the nature of this love? Paternal? Brotherly? Affectionate? Sexual? You decide.
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**Big Picture Study Questions**

1. Who is "thee"?

2. Does this poem necessarily keep living so long as humans keep breathing? Is the speaker right?

3. Lines 8 and 12 seem to do a bit of foreshadowing. Why? Why not just surprise us with the turn and the couplet?

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