



READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, graphics, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods. **RC-12(A)** Reflect on understanding to monitor comprehension.

Sonnet 30 Sonnet 75

Poetry by Edmund Spenser

Meet the Author

Edmund Spenser 1552?–1599

Although Edmund Spenser was born in London and educated in England, he spent most of his life in Ireland. It was there that he wrote one of the greatest epic romances in English literature, *The Faerie Queene*. The poem tells the stories of six knights, each representing a particular moral virtue. Spenser was innovative in devising a new verse form, in mixing features of the Italian romance and the classical epic, and in using archaic English words.

Move to Ireland In 1576, Spenser earned a master's degree from Pembroke College at Cambridge University. Three years later, he published his first important work of poetry, *The Shepheardes Calender*, which was immediately popular. It consisted of 12 pastoral poems, one for each month of the year. In 1580, Spenser became secretary to the lord deputy of Ireland, who was charged with defending English settlers from native Irish opposed to England's colonization of Ireland. Spenser wrote the rest of his major poetry in Ireland, and that country's landscape and people greatly influenced his writing.

Spenser held various civil service posts during his years in Ireland. In 1589, he was granted a large estate surrounding Kilcolman Castle, which had

been taken from an Irish rebel. Spenser's friend Sir Walter Raleigh owned a neighboring estate.

Second Marriage Spenser's courtship of his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle, inspired him to write a sonnet sequence (a series of related sonnets) called *Amoretti*, which means "little love poems." The details and emotions presented in the sonnets are thought to be partly autobiographical. "Sonnet 30" and "Sonnet 75" are part of this sonnet sequence. To celebrate his marriage to Boyle in 1594, Spenser wrote the lyric poem *Epithalamion*.

In 1598, just four years after Spenser's marriage, Irish rebels overran his estate and burned his home. Spenser and his family had to flee through an underground tunnel. They escaped to Cork, and a few months later, Spenser traveled to London to deliver documents reporting on the problems in Ireland. He died shortly after his arrival in London.

In honor of his great literary achievements, Spenser was buried near Geoffrey Chaucer—one of his favorite poets and a major influence—in what is now called the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. An inscription on Spenser's monument calls him "the Prince of Poets in his time."

Author Online

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DID YOU KNOW?

Edmund Spenser ...

- worked as a servant to pay for his room and board at college.
- wrote a satire that was censored because it insulted Queen Elizabeth I and other English notables.



● POETIC FORM: SPENSERIAN SONNET

The **Spenserian sonnet** is a variation on the English sonnet, which was introduced in Britain by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the 1530s. Like the English (or Shakespearean) sonnet, the Spenserian sonnet consists of three four-line units, called **quatrains**, followed by two rhymed lines, called a **couplet**. Each quatrain addresses the poem's main idea, thought, or question, and the couplet provides an answer or summation. What is unique to the Spenserian sonnet is the interlocking **rhyme scheme** (*abab bcbc cdcd ee*) that links the three quatrains.

As you read the following Spenserian sonnets, notice the rhymes that connect one quatrain to the next, and the way in which the sonnet's main idea is developed and resolved.

● READING SKILL: SUMMARIZE MAJOR IDEAS IN POETRY

When you **summarize** a poem, you briefly restate the main ideas or themes in your own words. Summarizing a sonnet's major ideas can help you understand and remember what you read, especially when the text or language is particularly complicated or difficult to understand. You can break down each quatrain and the couplet and use your own words to summarize the meaning of each part.

For each Spenser sonnet, use a chart like the one shown to help you summarize the major ideas in each part of the poem.

"Sonnet 75"	
Part of Poem	Major Idea
1st quatrain	Whenever I write my beloved's name in the sand, the waves wash it away.
2nd quatrain	
3rd quatrain	
couplet	

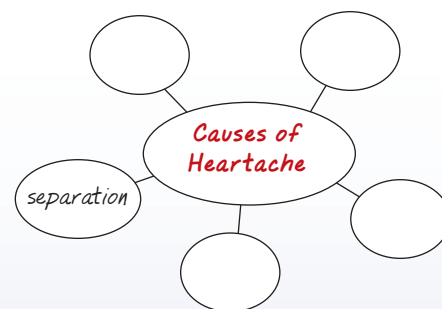


Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What makes your HEART ache?

Love can bring great joy— and great sorrow. Poets and songwriters probably lament the heartache of love as much as they extol its pleasures. Anyone who falls in love knows, or soon finds out, that the ride can be bumpy.

DISCUSS Think about all the things that can cause heartache in a loving relationship. Make a web of your ideas. Then share your web with a partner and compare your ideas.



SONNET 30

Edmund Spenser

My love is like to ice, and I to fire;
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat? **A**
5 Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not delayed by her heart-frozen cold:
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told
10 That fire which all things melts, should harden ice:
And ice which is congealed with senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device.
Such is the pow'r of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.

A SUMMARIZE

What is the main idea in lines 1–4?

8 augmented manifold: greatly increased.

11 congealed: solidified.

14 kind: nature.



SONNET 75

Edmund Spenser

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washéd it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
5 “Vain man,” said she, “that dost in vain assay,
A mortal thing so to immortalize.
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke my name be wipéd out likewise.”
“Not so,” quod I, “let baser things devise
10 To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name,
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.” **B**

1 strand: beach.

5 assay: try.

8 eke: also.

9 quod: said.

B SPENSERIAN SONNET

Note the words Spenser uses in his end rhymes. In what ways are they related to the major ideas in this sonnet?

Comprehension

1. **Recall** In “Sonnet 30,” to what does the speaker compare himself and his beloved?
2. **Recall** In “Sonnet 75,” what happens when the speaker writes his lover’s name in the sand?
3. **Paraphrase** In “Sonnet 75,” how does the speaker’s lover describe him and his actions (lines 5– 6)?



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Literary Analysis

4. **Identify Paradox** A **paradox** is a statement that seems to contradict ordinary experience but actually reveals a hidden truth. What paradox does Spenser develop in “Sonnet 30”?
5. **Examine Spenserian Sonnet** Reread lines 13–14 of “Sonnet 30.” Does this couplet suggest that the speaker has overcome the heartache expressed in the preceding quatrains? Support your answer.
6. **Summarize Major Ideas in Poetry** Look over the charts you created as you read. On the basis of the ideas you noted, what would you say is the **theme** of each poem?
7. **Draw Conclusions** In these two sonnets, how would you characterize the speaker’s views about the following?
 - a beloved woman (“Sonnet 75,” lines 9–12)
 - romantic love (“Sonnet 30,” lines 13–14; “Sonnet 75,” lines 13–14)
 - the value of his poetry (“Sonnet 75,” lines 11–14)
8. **Compare Texts** In “Sonnet 75,” Spenser allows the speaker’s lover to respond directly to the speaker. Compare her statements with those of the nymph in Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (page 316). In what ways are their responses similar?

Literary Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** The poet John Hollander has written that some literary scholars have found **Spenserian sonnets** “somewhat syrupy beside Shakespeare.” Do you think most contemporary readers would consider these sonnets by Spenser “syrupy”? Cite examples from the sonnets to support your answer.

*What makes your **HEART** ache?*

Heartache, or classic love sickness, is part of falling in love. Why does being “madly” in love have to involve the sadness of heartache?

Conventions in Writing

◆ **GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Use Sensory Details**

In “Sonnet 30,” Spenser reinforces his images of fire and ice by using **adjectives** and **verbs** that appeal to the senses. Here is an example:

*Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not delayed by her heart-frozen cold:
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold? (lines 5–8)*

Notice how the adjective *boiling* and the verb *burn* intensify the images. Such sensory details are especially effective when applied to subjects such as fire and ice, which have strong sensory associations. Spenser effectively uses these details to heighten the disparity between the two lovers’ feelings.

PRACTICE Rewrite each of the following sentences, changing or adding adjectives and verbs to help create stronger sensory images.

EXAMPLE

As the director posted the final cast list on the board in the school theater, I waited in anticipation.

As the director posted the final cast list on the worn corkboard in the school theater, I stood as still as a stone, barely breathing in anticipation.

- 1. The room filled with applause each time the speaker made a good point.
- 2. When the movie ended, we walked to our favorite restaurant and discussed what we had just experienced.
- 3. I remained on the waiting-room couch while my grandfather met with his doctor.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of heartache by responding to this prompt. Then, use the **revising tips** to improve your letter.

WRITING PROMPT

WRITE A LETTER We have all known someone who has suffered from **heartache**. Suppose that you are a friend of the speaker in “Sonnet 30.” Would you console him or encourage him to move on? Using examples from the sonnet, write a **two-paragraph letter** with your advice to the speaker.

REVISING TIPS

- Make sure some of the details you cite include sensory details.
- Read your letter again. Did you answer all the questions in the prompt?



WRITING 16 Write a persuasive essay.

Interactive Revision



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