Detailed

**“Prothalamion” – TEXT-**  Edmund Spenser

1.CALM was the day, and through the trembling air

2Sweet breathing Zephyrus did softly play,

3A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay

4Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister fair;

5When I whose sullen care,

6Through discontent of my long fruitless stay

7In prince's court, and expectation vain

8Of idle hopes, which still do fly away

9Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain,

10Walked forth to ease my pain

11Along the shore of silver streaming Thames,

12Whose rutty bank, the which his river hems,

13Was painted all with variable flowers,

14And all the meads adorned with dainty gems,

15Fit to deck maidens' bowers,

16And crown their paramours,

17Against the bridal day, which is not long:

18      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

19There, in a meadow, by the river's side,

20A flock of nymphs I chanced to espy,

21All lovely daughters of the flood thereby,

22With goodly greenish locks, all loose untied,

23As each had been a bride;

24And each one had a little wicker basket,

25Made of fine twigs, entrailed curiously,

26In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,

27And with fine fingers cropt full featously

28The tender stalks on high.

29Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,

30They gathered some; the violet pallid blue,

31The little daisy, that at evening closes,

32The virgin lily, and the primrose true,

33With store of vermeil roses,

34To deck their bridegrooms' posies

35Against the bridal day, which was not long:

36      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

37With that, I saw two swans of goodly hue

38Come softly swimming down along the Lee;

39Two fairer birds I yet did never see.

40The snow which doth the top of Pindus strew,

41Did never whiter shew,

42Nor Jove himself, when he a swan would be

43For love of Leda, whiter did appear:

44Yet Leda was they say as white as he,

45Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near.

46So purely white they were,

47That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,

48Seemed foul to them, and bade his billows spare

49To wet their silken feathers, lest they might

50Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,

51And mar their beauties bright,

52That shone as heaven's light,

53Against their bridal day, which was not long:

54      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

55Eftsoons the nymphs, which now had flowers their fill,

56Ran all in haste, to see that silver brood,

57As they came floating on the crystal flood.

58Whom when they saw, they stood amazed still,

59Their wondering eyes to fill.

60Them seemed they never saw a sight so fair,

61Of fowls so lovely, that they sure did deem

62Them heavenly born, or to be that same pair

63Which through the sky draw Venus' silver team;

64For sure they did not seem

65To be begot of any earthly seed,

66But rather angels, or of angels' breed:

67Yet were they bred of Somers-heat they say,

68In sweetest season, when each flower and weed

69The earth did fresh array,

70So fresh they seemed as day,

71Even as their bridal day, which was not long:

72      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

73Then forth they all out of their baskets drew

74Great store of flowers, the honour of the field,

75That to the sense did fragrant odours yield,

76All which upon those goodly birds they threw,

77And all the waves did strew,

78That like old Peneus' waters they did seem,

79When down along by pleasant Tempe's shore,

80Scattered with flowers, through Thessaly they stream,

81That they appear through lilies' plenteous store,

82Like a bride's chamber floor.

83Two of those nymphs meanwhile, two garlands bound,

84Of freshest flowers which in that mead they found,

85The which presenting all in trim array,

86Their snowy foreheads therewithal they crowned,

87Whilst one did sing this lay,

88Prepared against that day,

89Against their bridal day, which was not long:

90      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

91'Ye gentle birds, the world's fair ornament,

92And heaven's glory, whom this happy hour

93Doth lead unto your lovers' blissful bower,

94Joy may you have and gentle heart's content

95Of your love's complement:

96And let fair Venus, that is queen of love,

97With her heart-quelling son upon you smile,

98Whose smile, they say, hath virtue to remove

99All love's dislike, and friendship's faulty guile

100For ever to assoil.

101Let endless peace your steadfast hearts accord,

102And blessed plenty wait upon your board,

103And let your bed with pleasures chaste abound,

104That fruitful issue may to you afford,

105Which may your foes confound,

106And make your joys redound

107Upon your bridal day, which is not long:

108      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.'

109So ended she; and all the rest around

110To her redoubled that her undersong,

111Which said their bridal day should not be long.

112And gentle echo from the neighbour ground

113Their accents did resound.

114So forth those joyous birds did pass along,

115Adown the Lee, that to them murmured low,

116As he would speak, but that he lacked a tongue,

117Yet did by signs his glad affection show,

118Making his stream run slow.

119And all the fowl which in his flood did dwell

120Gan flock about these twain, that did excel

121The rest so far as Cynthia doth shend

122The lesser stars. So they, enranged well,

123Did on those two attend,

124And their best service lend,

125Against their wedding day, which was not long:

126      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

127At length they all to merry London came,

128To merry London, my most kindly nurse,

129That to me gave this life's first native source;

130Though from another place I take my name,

131An house of ancient fame.

132There when they came, whereas those bricky towers,

133The which on Thames' broad aged back do ride,

134Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers

135There whilom wont the Templar Knights to bide,

136Till they decayed through pride:

137Next whereunto there stands a stately place,

138Where oft I gained gifts and goodly grace

139Of that great lord, which therein wont to dwell,

140Whose want too well now feels my friendless case.

141But ah, here fits not well

142Old woes but joys to tell

143Against the bridal day, which is not long:

144      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

145Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer,

146Great England's glory, and the world's wide wonder,

147Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did thunder,

148And Hercules' two pillars standing near

149Did make to quake and fear:

150Fair branch of honour, flower of chivalry,

151That fillest England with thy triumph's fame,

152Joy have thou of thy noble victory,

153And endless happiness of thine own name

154That promiseth the same:

155That through thy prowess and victorious arms,

156Thy country may be freed from foreign harms;

157And great Elisa's glorious name may ring

158Through all the world, filled with thy wide alarms,

159Which some brave Muse may sing

160To ages following,

161Upon the bridal day, which is not long:

162      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

163From those high towers this noble lord issuing,

164Like radiant Hesper when his golden hair

165In th'Ocean billows he hath bathed fair,

166Descended to the river's open viewing,

167With a great train ensuing.

168Above the rest were goodly to be seen

169Two gentle knights of lovely face and feature

170Beseeming well the bower of any queen,

171With gifts of wit and ornaments of nature,

172Fit for so goodly stature;

173That like the twins of Jove they seemed in sight,

174Which deck the baldric of the heavens bright.

175They two forth pacing to the river's side,

176Received those two fair birds, their love's delight;

177Which, at th' appointed tide,

178Each one did make his bride

179Against their bridal day, which is not long:

180      Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

 **“Prothalamion” Summary**

It was a calm day with a light breeze in the air, which cooled things down and lessened the heat of the brightly shining sun. I was frustrated with the time I'd wasted at court: my political ambitions had failed, and my hopes turned out to be empty illusions. To make myself feel better, I went for a walk along the banks of the River Thames. The shore and the meadows surrounding the river were covered with flowers—flowers so beautiful that they could be hung up in young women's room, or made into crowns for their fiancés in advance of their wedding day, which is not far away: please be quiet, River Thames, until I finish my poem.

In a meadow by the river, I saw a group of nymphs—the mythological daughters of the river. Their hair was green and hanging down loosely, and they looked like brides. Each of them was carrying a wicker basket woven from twigs and full of flowers that they'd gathered from the meadow. The nymphs quickly and skillfully plucked all kinds of flowers—including blue violets, daisies (which close at night), lilies (which are so white they seem virginal) primroses, and vermeil roses—which they would use to decorate their bridegrooms on their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

I saw two beautiful swans swimming down the River Lee. I had never seen such beautiful birds. The snow on top of the famous Pindus mountain range has never been whiter than those swans. Not even the god Zeus, when he transformed himself into a swan in order to seduce the princess Leda, was as white as those swans. And though people say that Leda was as pale as Zeus was, neither Leda nor Zeus came close to being as white as the swans before me in the river. In fact, the swans were so white that even the calm river upon which they swam seemed to make them dirty; as such, the river told his waves not to touch the birds' silky feathers, in order to prevent the waves from dirtying the lovely birds and diminishing their beauty, which was as bright as the sun will be on their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

The nymphs, who had by this point collected enough flowers, ran to see those silver swans as they floated down the river. And when they saw them, the nymphs stood in stunned amazement, filling their eyes with the wonderful sight. The nymphs thought that they had never seen such lovely birds, and they assumed that they were angelic, or that they were the mythological swans who drew the goddess Venus's chariot through the sky. The swans were so beautiful it seemed impossible that they were born from any mortal creature; instead, the nymphs thought they were angels or the children of angels. Yet, the truth is that the swans were bred from the heat of the sun in the spring, when the earth was covered in fresh flowers and plants. They seemed as new and fresh as their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

Then the nymphs took out of their baskets all the sweet-smelling flowers they'd picked and threw them onto the swans and onto the waves of the river, so that river seemed like the river Peneus in Greece, which flows through the Tempe Valley in Thessaly. Indeed, the river was so covered in lilies that it seemed like the floor of a bridal chamber. Two of the nymphs wove flower crowns from the freshest flowers they could find in the meadow; they presented these to the swans, who wore them on their foreheads. Meanwhile, another nymph sang the following song, which was prepared for the swans' wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

"You swans, who are the world's beautiful decoration and the glory of the skies: you are being led to your lovers, and I wish you joy and happiness in your marriage. I further pray that Venus, the queen of love, and her son, Cupid, will smile on you, and with their smiles, remove all fights and conflicts from your marriages. I pray that your hearts will be full of peace, your kitchens full of food, and your bedrooms proper and fruitful, so that your children defeat your enemies, and that your joy will overflow on your wedding day, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem."

That was the end of the nymph's song, and everyone repeated her, announcing that the swans' wedding day wasn't far off—and the ground echoed with this line, which then echoed throughout the meadow. Thus the joyful swans went down the River Lee. Its waters murmured as they passed, almost as though the river would speak to them if he were able to talk. But he did make his affection clear by slowing down his current. And all the birds that lived on the river began to flock around the two swans, who were far more beautiful than those other birds—just as the moon is far more beautiful than the stars around it. In this way, they arranged themselves around the swans and waited on them, and lent them their best service for their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

After a while, they all came to London, which was where I was born and raised, though I am named after a different place, and come from an old, well-known family. They came to a place where there were brick towers on the banks of the Thames, which serve now as housing for law students, though in the past they were the headquarters of the Knights Templar, until that order crumbled due to pride. Next to the brick towers there is a place where I often received favors from the important man who lives there—whose protection I sorely miss now, though it is inappropriate to meditate on such grievances here, and I should limit myself to talking about the joys of the wedding day, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

But in that place there now lives an aristocrat who brings honor to England—and whom the rest of the world admires. On a recent mission, he terrorized the Spanish and made the cliffs on either side of the straits of Gibraltar shake with fear. Man of honor, exceptional knight, the news of your triumphs travels across England. I hope you take joy in your victory and that you remain happy forever—since even your name promises that you will be happy. And I hope that through your skill and your victories in war, other countries won't be able to harm England. And I hope that Queen Elizabeth's name will be celebrated throughout the world, accompanied by your calls to arm, which some poet will preserve in song for the rest of human history on the day of the wedding, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

From the tall battlements of the house, the same aristocrat whom I described above came out like the evening star, Hesperus, who bathes his blond hair in the ocean all day and then rises above the horizon at night. The aristocrat came down to the river with many people following him. Among the crowd, two handsome knights stood out, who would've been a fitting match for any queen. Indeed, they were so intelligent and well-made that they seemed like Zeus's sons, Castor and Pollock, who, in Greek mythology became stars, part of the constellation Gemini. The two knights went down to the river to meet the two swans, whom they loved dearly. At the scheduled time they will get married, and that wedding day is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

NON –DETAILED TEXT

# Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18": Summary and Explanation

## Introduction to Sonnet 18

"Sonnet 18" is regarded as one of William Shakespeare's masterpieces. It is a sonnet that has received massive appreciation from critics with regard to its structure and theme. It is a part of the Procreation Sonnets, which includes sonnets 1 through 126.

The Procreation Sonnets are those of Shakespeare's sonnets wherein he argues that the Fair Youth should marry and produce children. Moreover, the Fair Youth will be able to live forever through these children after his death.

The Fair Youth remains an elusive mystery. Nobody knows the Fair Youth's name. What was his relationship with Shakespeare? The character remains an enigma. Whatever may be the case, this sonnet is one of the most beautiful sonnets in the history of English literature.

## Summary of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18

In this beautiful sonnet, Shakespeare is confused as to whether he should compare the beauty of his beloved to a summer’s day or not. He is of the opinion that his beloved is more beautiful than a summer’s day, and puts forward various reasons to support his point of view.

He says that the duration of the summer is very short as it sees the dawn of winter very quickly (i.e., the end of summer). That’s one reason the poet says that his beloved is more beautiful than the summer.

Then he moves on to say that every beautiful thing has to see the end of its life. It may occur due to natural causes or by chance. Whatever may be the case, every beautiful thing will decline in this world.

Thereafter, he turns to his beloved and says that he will not lose their beauty and it will not decline like other things. Rather, he will possess this beauty forever. Death will not be able to touch Shakespeare's beloved as he has preserved them through his poetic magic.

The more the verses of Shakespeare are read, the more the beauty of his beloved will grow. As long as there are human beings and they live, his beloved will live.

## Shakespeare's Sonnet 18: Lines 1-2

**Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?**

**Thou art more lovely and more temperate:**

In these lines, the poet is asking his beloved whether he should compare his beauty to a summer’s day or not. If he were to compare his beauty, then he would really come to know that his beauty is more gorgeous, stunning, and more constant than the summer’s day.

Literally, the word temperate means constant and never changes during the course of time. He says that the summer season is not an everlasting thing. It has to face its end as soon as winter takes its place.

If you look at the very first line of the sonnet, it appears that the poet is addressing his beloved. We don’t know whether the addressee is present at the moment or not. Yet, the word thee suggests that he is addressing his beloved who is present before him.

It is pertinent to recall here that the person he is addressing is a mystery. Nobody knows about the identity of the beloved poet. It is really shrouded in mystery and no one has given a satisfactory account of his beloved.

**Notes:**

* **Temperate:**Literally, the word temperate means moderate, not going beyond limits, not excessive, but here it means constant, everlasting, consistent. The poet wants to be clear that the beauty of his beloved is not going to change unlike the summer season, which keeps on changing.
* **Summer’s Day:** It means a summer season in this context.

## ****Shakespeare’s****Sonnet 18****: Lines 3-4****

***Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,***

***And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:***

In these lines, the poet goes on to explain what he means by saying the first two lines. He says that the beauty of his beloved is more beautiful and constant than the beauty of summer. We know that the beauty of summer is totally dependent upon flowers. That’s why summer looks beautiful and charming.

Suppose, we have summer without flowers! Would you enjoy it? Of course, you will never ever enjoy the summer. Thus, in these lines, darling buds, which mean flowers, are a symbol of beauty.

The gusts of rough winds shake the flowers to such an extent that they fall down on the ground, making the summer lose its beauty. That is the reason the poet is of the opinion that the beauty of summer is not everlasting. It is subject to mortality, while the beauty of his beloved is everlasting.

We know that when we hire something on a lease, we have to follow the terms and conditions of the lease (i.e., an agreement for a particular period). After the expiry of that particular period, we have to return the thing to its owner.

In the same way, the summer has signed a lease with nature for a limited period. After that specific period, it will have to go, while winter will replace it. Hence, its beauty remains for a specific period as compared with the beauty of the beloved of the poet, which is constant and doesn't change with the passage of time.

## Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18: Lines 5-6

**Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,**

**And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;**

You might have observed changes in the temperature during summer. Sometimes, the temperature goes up, while other times it falls down. That’s why the summer is very hot and relatively cold at different times.

The poet calls the sun the eye of the heaven. Moreover, when there are clouds, we cannot feel the heat of the sun in its full essence. The reason is that the rays of the sun don’t fall directly on the earth as they are hindered by clouds. Thus, the sun seems to be hazy and blurred. That’s why the poet says that the sun appears to be dim.

In these lines, the poet has personified the sun by giving it human attributes. Its complexion is used to describe the facial colour of a person. It is used only for human beings and not for inanimate objects.

**Notes:**

* **Eye of Heaven:**This phrase means Sun.
* **Complexion:** It means the facial colour of a person.

## ****Shakespeare's****Sonnet 18****: Lines 7-8****

***And every fair from fair sometime declines,***

***By chance, or nature’s changing course untrimm’d.***

In these lines, the poet is of the opinion that everything, which is beautiful, must face its end by chance or naturally. The word decline means death, end, and elimination. Actually, the poet is referring to the death of beautiful things (i.e., living things), which occurs in two ways: by chance or naturally.

When someone dies during an accident, such a death would be termed as death by chance, but if someone dies naturally without interference from an external force, then such a death is called natural death. Thus, the word untrimmed here means uninterrupted, unchanged, and spoiled.

In simple words, the poet says that every living thing, which is beautiful, will face its death either by chance or through nature’s will. Beauty is mortal and it will have to face its death at any cost. Nothing will remain here except his beloved, who is above all and is not subject to any external force.

**Notes:**

* **Decline**: It means death, end, and elimination.
* **Untrimm’d:**Itmeans uninterrupted, unchanged, and spoiled.

## ****Shakespeare's****Sonnet 18:****Lines 9-10****

***But thy eternal summer shall not fade,***

***Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,***

The poet is immensely impressed with the beauty of his beloved and he is appreciating it a great deal. He is talking about the permanence of his beauty in contrast to the beauty of summer, which is ephemeral. He says that the summer of his beloved will never come to an end. Moreover, he will not lose his beauty.

The word summer here means happy time that he is enjoying. The beloved of the poet will enjoy good time and his beauty forever. In the following lines, he explains as to why his beloved will remain beautiful forever when compared with the summer.

Notes:

* **Ow’st:** It means to own, possess or have something.
* **Fair:**Throughout the sonnet it means beauty.

## ****Shakespeare's****Sonnet 18****: Lines 11-12****

**Nor shall death brag thou wander’st in his shade,**

**When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st;**

In these lines, the poet is talking about the immortality of the beauty of his beloved. He says that nothing can take away the beauty of his beloved. So much so, death will not be able to drag him into the shadow of death. The poet has personified death as an assassin, who kills every person, who comes in his way.

The idea here is that death will not be able to drag the beloved of the poet into his grave as he is being immortalized through immortal verses of the poet. Nothing can influence the beauty of his beloved as he has been preserved into the immortal poesy of the poet. The last couplet of this sonnet will complete the meaning of these lines. So, keep on reading it.

## ****Shakespeare's****Sonnet 18****: Lines 13-14****

**So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,**

**So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.**

In this beautiful couplet, the poet wants to convey a message to his beloved that he will enjoy his life as long as there are human beings on the surface of this earth. As the beloved of the poet is preserved in the eternal poetry of the poet, his beloved will enjoy his life each and every time people read his poetry. The more people read his poetry, the more his beloved will enjoy his life.

You might have observed that those people, who die aimlessly or without any cause, are never remembered by people. They become a part of history and are buried over by time. But those, who are having a particular characteristic or any other achievement they have made, are remembered in the annals of history. Their achievements are commemorated everywhere and every time someone reads his account.

For example, Lady Diana is remembered for her spectacular beauty. Though she is dead, yet she lives in the heart of people. In the same way, the poet wants to immortalize his beloved in his poetry. As long as humans will read his poetry, his beloved will be appreciated and commemorated.

"A Valediction: Of Weeping- John Donne

   Let me pour forth

2My tears before thy face whilst I stay here,

3For thy face coins them, and thy stamp they bear,

4And by this mintage they are something worth,

5         For thus they be

6         Pregnant of thee;

7Fruits of much grief they are, emblems of more,

8When a tear falls, that thou falls which it bore,

9So thou and I are nothing then, when on a diverse shore.

10         On a round ball

11A workman that hath copies by can lay

12An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,

13And quickly make that, which was nothing, all;

14         So doth each tear

15         Which thee doth wear,

16A globe, yea world, by that impression grow,

17Till thy tears mixed with mine do overflow

18This world; by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolvèd so.

19         O more than moon,

20Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere;

21Weep me not dead in thine arms, but forbear

22To teach the sea what it may do too soon.

23         Let not the wind

24         Example find,

25To do me more harm than it purposeth;

26Since thou and I sigh one another's breath,

27Whoe'er sighs most is cruellest, and hastes the other's death.

"A Valediction: Of Weeping" is English Metaphysical poet John Donne's tale of a sad goodbye. As the speaker and his beloved share a last embrace before the speaker leaves on a long voyage, the speaker reflects on what his beloved means to him—literally. Every teardrop that holds his beloved's reflection, the speaker says, is a whole world, marked with the beloved's face as a globe is marked with the continents. Love, the poem suggests, can make two people into each other's worlds, and thus turn a farewell into the end of the world. Like nearly all of Donne's poetry, "A Valediction: Of Weeping" wasn't published until after Donne's death; it first appeared in the posthumous collection Poems (1633).

## “A Valediction: Of Weeping” Summary

* + Let me weep while I'm here in your arms. As long as I'm here, your face reflects in my teardrops, so they're stamped with your image like coins stamped with the faces of kings and queens—and that makes them valuable. You see, with your reflection in them, my tears become pregnant with images of you. These tears are the fruit of terrible mourning, and the symbols of much more pain to come. Whenever one of my tears drops, the little image of you in it falls and vanishes, too. In just that way, when you and I are far away in different countries, we might as well be nothing.

On a plain sphere, a craftsman who has a map to work from can inscribe a Europe, an Africa, and an Asia, and thus make what was just a blank into the whole world. In the same way, every tear of mine that reflects your face becomes a globe—no, a whole world. Soon, though, your tears, mixing with mine, flood that little world: your tears wash away your own heavenly reflection in *my* tears.

O my beloved, more than the moon to me, don't use your tidal pull to flood me in oceans of tears. Don't cry for me as if I'm already dead while I stand here in your arms; don't teach the ocean to drown me, as it very well may all too soon. Don't give the wind a good example of how it can blow more dangerously than it intends to now. Since you and I share our life's breath, whoever sighs more deeply is the most unkind: wasting breath means hurrying along the other's death.

**Stanza 1**:

* + - While the speaker and his beloved are still together and still embracing, the speaker observes, every one of his tears is dear to him: they're all "stamp[ed]" with the tiny reflection of his beloved's face, and "by this mintage" (that is, through this coin-making process), they become valuable. This conceit suggests that the beloved's image has a transformative power. Just as the stamp of a monarch's face turns plain metal into legal tender, the beloved's face turns a plain teardrop into something precious.
		- The speaker doesn't stop there. In the very next lines, he remarks that each of these stamped tears is also "pregnant of thee": that is, the beloved's reflected image turns each teardrop into a tiny pregnant womb hosting a reflection-baby. This striking image suggests that the speaker and his beloved are so close that they practically inhabit each other's bodies. The male speaker becomes the mother, impregnated by the sight of his beloved!

**Stanza 2**:

* + - The speaker has already declared that the reflection of his beloved makes his tears fertile and valuable. His next conceit goes a step further. In the first lines of the second stanza, he introduces the idea that a blank sphere, an image of "nothing," becomes an image of "all" when it's decorated with the continents: in other words, it becomes a globe, a picture of the whole world. Just the same thing happens when his beloved is reflected in his tears, the speaker insists. Her image makes every tear that falls from his eyes into a world—an elegant way of saying that she's everything to him.

**Stanza 3**:

* + - For all that the speaker feels his own tears are made precious by his beloved's presence, he's also eager to dry her tears, to console her. In the final stanza, then, he imagines her as a "moon," capable of drawing up the tides. Since he's about to leave on a sea voyage, he tells her, she must not cry so hard, in case her tide of tears rises up and drowns him, or her heartbroken sighs encourage the wind to blow up a storm.
		- This closing image suggests that the speaker feels the bittersweet pain and the responsibility of love. The couple's love beautifies their grief at parting—and makes the speaker wish his beloved didn't have to hurt so badly.

Paradise Lost (Book IX) - John Milton ( lines 795 - 833) – text

O Sovran, vertuous, precious of all Trees [ 795 ] In Paradise, of operation blest To Sapience, hitherto obscur'd , infam'd , And thy fair Fruit let hang, as to no end Created; but henceforth my early care, Not without Song, each Morning, and due praise [ 800 ] Shall tend thee, and the fertil burden ease Of thy full branches offer'd free to all; Till dieted by thee I grow mature In knowledge, as the Gods who all things know; Though others envie what they cannot give; [ 805 ] For had the gift bin theirs, it had not here Thus grown. Experience, next to thee I owe, Best guide; not following thee, I had remaind In ignorance, thou op'nst Wisdoms way, And giv'st access, though secret she retire. [ 810 ] And I perhaps am secret ; Heav'n is high, High and remote to see from thence distinct Each thing on Earth; and other care perhaps May have diverted from continual watch Our great Forbidder, safe with all his Spies [ 815 ] About him. But to Adam in what sort Shall I appeer? shall I to him make known As yet my change, and give him to partake Full happiness with mee, or rather not, But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power [ 820 ] Without Copartner? so to add what wants In Femal Sex, the more to draw his Love, And render me more equal, and perhaps, A thing not undesireable , somtime Superior: for inferior who is free ? [ 825 ] This may be well: but what if God have seen And Death ensue? then I shall be no more, And Adam wedded to another Eve , Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct; Source URL: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading\_room/pl/book\_9/index.shtml Saylor URL: http://www.saylor.org/courses/engl402/ Attributed to: [Thomas H. Luxon ] www.saylor.org Page 20 of 41 A death to think. Confirm'd then I resolve, [ 830 ] Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe: So dear I love him, that with him all deaths I could endure, without him live no life. So saying, from the Tree her step she turnd

summary

Eve talks about how wonderful the tree of knowledge is, and says that now that she has started eating its fruit, she has become so much more mature in terms of her knowledge. She also thanks Satan for encouraging her to eat from the tree, as if it weren't for him she would still be ignorant. As she thinks about how much better it is to have knowledge rather than ignorance, she calls God our "great forbidder," protected by all his angels, where she is obviously wondering why he would deprive people of knowledge. But then she wonders whether or not she will tell Adam about the tree. If she doesn't, then for once the two of them will be of equal intelligence. But then she wonders if she will die from having eaten the fruit, and dreads the thought of that meaning Adam will find another wife to replace her. Therefore, she decides that he should share the tree with her, where they can live or die together.

## The Rape of the Lock

The Rape of the Lock (1714) had its origins in an actual incident that occurred in 1711. Robert, Lord Petre surreptitiously cut a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor, who he had been courting at the time. The Fermors took offense, and a schism developed between the two families. John [Caryll](https://www.gradesaver.com/popes-poems-and-prose/study-guide/character-list%22%20%5Cl%20%22caryll), a friend of both families and of Pope’s who had been present, suggested that Pope write a humorous poem about the event which would demonstrate to both families that the affair had been blown out of proportion, thereby effecting a reconciliation between them. Pope accordingly composed The Rape of the Lock.

Obviously aware of the celebrated mock epics of Boileau (Le lutrin, 1674) and Dryden (MacFlecknoe, 1676), Pope adopted the mock-heroic genre for his poem. Throughout the poem, Pope adopts classical epic devices to develop an ironic contrast between its structure and its content. The poem’s subject matter extends beyond an attempt to pacify two families, which became particularly obvious after a revised and enlarged version of the poem was published in 1714. It simultaneously satirizes the trivialities of fashionable society, provides a commentary on the contemporary distortion of moral values, and indicts human pride. The fashionable world that Pope depicts in The Rape of the Lock is at once artificial and trivial, governed by strict rules of decorum and the sublimation of human emotion. The severing of [Belinda](https://www.gradesaver.com/popes-poems-and-prose/study-guide/character-list#belinda)’s hair acts as a catalyst that shatters the order of this artificial world. Once the rules of decorum are broken, an emotional floodgate opens, and the characters’ reactions to this disruption are correspondingly hyperbolic. Pope thus reveals the fragility and vulnerability of these larger-than-life characters.

Once comfortable with the epic and mock-heroic genres, Pope channeled his writing into two separate projects: translations of classical epics (most famously, The Iliad) and various satires, several of which borrowed the mock-heroic structure he explored in The Rape of the Lock.

 **Summary**

## Canto 1

Canto 1

### Summary

*The Rape of the Lock* begins with a passage outlining the subject of the poem and invoking the aid of the muse. Then the sun (“Sol”) appears to initiate the leisurely morning routines of a wealthy household. Lapdogs shake themselves awake, bells begin to ring, and although it is already noon, Belinda still sleeps. She has been dreaming, and we learn that the dream has been sent by “her guardian Sylph,” Ariel. The dream is of a handsome youth who tells her that she is protected by “unnumber’d Spirits”—an army of supernatural beings who once lived on earth as human women. The youth explains that they are the invisible guardians of women’s chastity, although the credit is usually mistakenly given to “Honour” rather than to their divine stewardship. Of these Spirits, one particular group—the Sylphs, who dwell in the air—serve as Belinda’s personal guardians; they are devoted, lover-like, to any woman that “rejects mankind,” and they understand and reward the vanities of an elegant and frivolous lady like Belinda. Ariel, the chief of all Belinda’s puckish protectors, warns her in this dream that “some dread event” is going to befall her that day, though he can tell her nothing more specific than that she should “beware of Man!” Then Belinda awakes, to the licking tongue of her lapdog, Shock. Upon the delivery of a billet-doux, or love-letter, she forgets all about the dream. She then proceeds to her dressing table and goes through an elaborate ritual of dressing, in which her own image in the mirror is described as a “heavenly image,” a “goddess.” The Sylphs, unseen, assist their charge as she prepares herself for the day’s activities.

### Analysis

The opening of the poem establishes its mock-heroic style. Pope introduces the conventional epic subjects of love and war and includes an invocation to the muse and a dedication to the man (the historical John Caryll) who commissioned the poem. Yet the tone already indicates that the high seriousness of these traditional topics has suffered a diminishment. The second line confirms in explicit terms what the first line already suggests: the “am’rous causes” the poem describes are not comparable to the grand love of Greek heroes but rather represent a trivialized version of that emotion. The “contests” Pope alludes to will prove to be “mighty” only in an ironic sense. They are card-games and flirtatious tussles, not the great battles of epic tradition. Belinda is not, like Helen of Troy, “the face that launched a thousand ships” (see the SparkNote on [The Iliad](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/iliad/)), but rather a face that—although also beautiful—prompts a lot of foppish nonsense. The first two verse-paragraphs emphasize the comic inappropriateness of the epic style (and corresponding mind-set) to the subject at hand. Pope achieves this discrepancy at the level of the line and half-line; the reader is meant to dwell on the incompatibility between the two sides of his parallel formulations. Thus, in this world, it is “little men” who in “tasks so bold... engage”; and “soft bosoms” are the dwelling-place for “mighty rage.” In this startling juxtaposition of the petty and the grand, the former is real while the latter is ironic. In mock-epic, the high heroic style works not to dignify the subject but rather to expose and ridicule it. Therefore, the basic irony of the style supports the substance of the poem’s satire, which attacks the misguided values of a society that takes small matters for serious ones while failing to attend to issues of genuine importance.

With Belinda’s dream, Pope introduces the “machinery” of the poem—the supernatural powers that influence the action from behind the scenes. Here, the sprites that watch over Belinda are meant to mimic the gods of the Greek and Roman traditions, who are sometimes benevolent and sometimes malicious, but always intimately involved in earthly events. The scheme also makes use of other ancient hierarchies and systems of order. Ariel explains that women’s spirits, when they die, return “to their first Elements.” Each female personality type (these types correspond to the four humours) is converted into a particular kind of sprite. These gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and nymphs, in turn, are associated with the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. The airy sylphs are those who in their lifetimes were “light Coquettes”; they have a particular concern for Belinda because she is of this type, and this will be the aspect of feminine nature with which the poem is most concerned.

Indeed, Pope already begins to sketch this character of the “coquette” in this initial canto. He draws the portrait indirectly, through characteristics of the Sylphs rather than of Belinda herself. Their priorities reveal that the central concerns of womanhood, at least for women of Belinda’s class, are social ones. Woman’s “joy in gilded Chariots” indicates an obsession with pomp and superficial splendor, while “love of Ombre,” a fashionable card game, suggests frivolity. The erotic charge of this social world in turn prompts another central concern: the protection of chastity. These are women who value above all the prospect marrying to advantage, and they have learned at an early age how to promote themselves and manipulate their suitors without compromising themselves.

The Sylphs become an allegory for the mannered conventions that govern female social behavior. Principles like honor and chastity have become no more than another part of conventional interaction. Pope makes it clear that these women are not conducting themselves on the basis of abstract moral principles, but are governed by an elaborate social mechanism—of which the Sylphs cut a fitting caricature. And while Pope’s technique of employing supernatural machinery allows him to critique this situation, it also helps to keep the satire light and to exonerate individual women from too severe a judgment. If Belinda has all the typical female foibles, Pope wants us to recognize that it is partly because she has been educated and trained to act in this way. The society as a whole is as much to blame as she is. Nor are men exempt from this judgment. The competition among the young lords for the attention of beautiful ladies is depicted as a battle of vanity, as “wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive.” Pope’s phrases here expose an absurd attention to exhibitions of pride and ostentation. He emphasizes the inanity of discriminating so closely between things and people that are essentially the same in all important (and even most unimportant) respects.

Pope’s portrayal of Belinda at her dressing table introduces mock-heroic motifs that will run through the poem. The scene of her toilette is rendered first as a religious sacrament, in which Belinda herself is the priestess and her image in the looking glass is the Goddess she serves. This parody of the religious rites before a battle gives way, then, to another kind of mock-epic scene, that of the ritualized arming of the hero. Combs, pins, and cosmetics take the place of weapons as “awful Beauty puts on all its arms.”