



Devouring Time

This poem belongs to the first sequence of Shakespeare's sonnets, which is devoted to the fair youth.

William Shakespeare
Sonnet XIX
(1609)

Devouring Time, blunt¹ thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood²;
Pluck the keen³ teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood;

- 5 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st⁴,
And do whate'er thou wilt⁵, swift-footed Time,
To the wide world and all her fading sweets:
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime –

- 10 O, carve not⁶ with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
Him in thy course untainted⁷ do allow
For beauty's pattern⁷ to succeeding men.

Yet, do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

- 1 blunt. Spunta.
2 brood. Prole.
3 Pluck the keen. Strappa gli aguzzi.
4 fleet'st. Passi rapidamente.
5 whate'er thou wilt. Qualsiasi cosa tu voglia.
6 carve not. Non incidere.
7 pattern. Modello.

READING COMPETENCE

1 READ the text and match the highlighted words with their Italian translation.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 dal passo veloce | 4 intatto |
| 2 fronte | 5 artigli |
| 3 fauci | 6 efferato |

2 READ the text again and do the following activities.

1 Choose the correct alternative to complete the sentences.

- 1 The poet's addressee is
 - A Time.
 - B his lover.
 - C his art.
- 2 In the first quatrain the poet
 - A forbids Time to carry on his destructive work.
 - B acknowledges the function of Time.
 - C regrets he cannot stop Time.
- 3 In the second and third quatrains the poet
 - A asks Time to spare his lover.
 - B is envious of Time's skill at writing.
 - C surrenders to Time's action.
- 4 In the couplet the poet
 - A passively accepts the consequences of the passing of Time.
 - B prefers to 'kill' beauty with his words rather than leaving it to decay.
 - C stands out against Time making beauty eternal with his poetry.



- 2 Write down the rhyme scheme.
- 3 The turning point is
- A in the eight line.
 - B in the ninth line.
 - C in the thirteenth line.
- 4 What is the dominant tense in the sonnet?
- 5 'keen teeth' in line 3 contains
- A assonance.
 - B alliteration.
 - C simile.
- 6 'sorry seasons' in line 5 has
- A run-on-line.
 - B alliteration.
 - C onomatopoeia.
- 7 Underline the correct alternative.
Shakespeare presents Time as connected to *violent action and transience* / *gentle action and eternity*.
- 8 What animals is Time's action directed against in lines 1 and 3?
- 9 What kind of violence do lines 2 and 4 suggest?
- 10 Write down the actions done by Time in the third quatrain.
- 1
 - 2
- 11 The poet presents Time as
- A a lover of antiques.
 - B a sculptor or a writer of decay and death.
 - C an unhealthy agent.
- 12 What word in the last two lines shows that the poet is mocking Time?
- 13 Write down the main theme of the poem.