

Reading Course for English Majors

英语专业阅读教程 ——文学阅读

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... of my father spoke to me, I keep it in my skills. But I will always remember the
... I keep it inspired by the success go to success.

英语专业阅读教程

—— 文学阅读

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传统意义上的英美文学教材,如“英国(美国)文学史”“英国(美国)文学选读”,或者“英美诗歌”“英美小说”“英美戏剧”等,常常采取以史为主、以作品为辅的编写方式。不同于以往各种文字教材,本书的编写更强调对文学作品本身的阅读与鉴赏。因为我们在教学中发现学生阅读与理解文学原著的能力亟需提高,他们对文学批评的基本知识和方法需要加强,而市面上此类教材并不多。

本书共14章,涉及诗歌、短篇小说与戏剧。第1章从整体上介绍文学的概念;第2章简述理解与品鉴诗歌的基本方法;第3章介绍诗歌的格律、音韵特点;第4章介绍诗歌中的修辞语言;第5—8章分别选取古典诗歌、浪漫主义诗歌、现代诗歌以及后现代诗歌进行阅读与品鉴;第9—13章是有关短篇小说的阅读与鉴赏,其中第10章介绍小说的情节,第11章介绍小说的人物,第12章介绍小说的视角,第13章介绍小说的主题;第14章则是有关戏剧的阅读与鉴赏。各章均含有:该章主旨内容介绍、经典原文阅读及其赏析、练习题。

我们于2011年在湖南师范大学出版社出版了《英美文学阅读与鉴赏》,本书借鉴了其中的部分内容,但在结构篇章和内容上皆有较大不同。本书范文赏析大多是编者在教学中的心得体会。其中,诗歌方面的阅读与赏析借鉴了我们编著的《英美诗歌与诗论选读》(外语教学与研究出版社,2015)部分内容。曹波、吕爱晶、刘白、简功友、叶冬等老师参与了部分篇章的编写。本书的编写还借鉴了国内外相关书籍与材料,对此,我们在正文与参考文献中都予以详尽标注。由于参考材料来源复杂繁多,且编者精力有限,无法一一联络作者,在此,我们向这些中外作者、编者以及出版社致以诚挚的谢意!

编者

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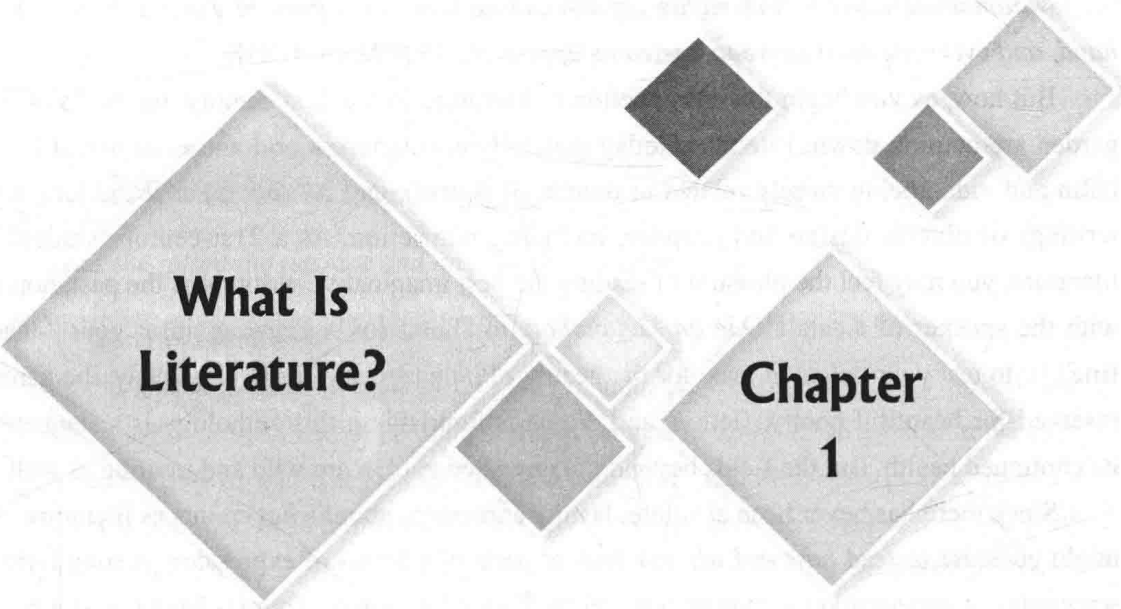
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What Is Literature?

Chapter 1

Could literature, then, include anything written? Or could it include works that do not depend on written words, such as staged performances or works recorded on media such as videotape or film? Every society has forms of oral storytelling or poetry, and some peoples do not write down the cherished myths and traditions that are their “literature”. If you go on to take more classes in literature or to major in English or another language, you might encounter texts that stretch the concept of literature still further: Websites or electronic games, for example.

The concept of “literature” as we know it is fairly new. Two hundred years ago, before universities were open to women or people of color, a small male elite studied the ancient classics in Greek and Latin, never dreaming of taking college courses about poetry or fiction or drama written in the modern languages in everyday use. Before modern literature became part of the college curriculum, the word *literature* itself had to be invented. At first, it referred to the cultivation of reading or the practice of writing (“he was a man of much literature”). Only later did it refer to a specialized category of works. Over time, this category narrowed more and more, eventually designating only a special set of imaginative writings, particularly associated with a language and nation (as in “English”, “American”, or “French” literature). Roughly speaking, by 1900 a college student could take a course in English literature, and the syllabus would exclude most nonfunctional forms of writing, from travel writing and journalism to biography, history or philosophy. Although students at the time would have read widely in these genres of nonfiction, the curriculum in “English literature” had become a walled-in flower garden filled with works of beauty, pleasure, and imagination, and its walls held fast for most of the 20th century.

National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach. — J. W. GOETHE

But now, as you begin this introduction to literature in the 21st century, the walls of that garden are coming down. Literature today generally encompasses oral and even visual forms (film and video being closely related to drama, of course), and it takes in, as it did long ago, writings of diverse design and purpose, including nonfiction. As a 21st-century student of literature, you may feel the pleasure of reading the best imaginative writings of the past, hoping with the speaker of Keats's *Ode on Melancholy* to "burst Joy's grape against" your "palate fine" — to test your palate or taste for the beauty of language and form. Obviously, the garden reserved for beautiful poetry, fiction, and drama is flourishing; this anthology is testament to its continued health. But the fields beyond the unwallled garden are wild and inviting as well.

Since there has never been absolute, lasting agreement about *what* counts as literature, we might consider instead *how* and *why* we look at particular forms of expression. A song lyric, a screenplay, a supermarket romance, a novel by Toni Morrison or Thomas Mann, and a poem by Walt Whitman or Katherine Philips — each may be interpreted in literary ways that yield insights and pleasures. Honing your skills at this kind of interpretation is the primary purpose of this book and most literature courses. By learning to recognize how a story, poem, or play works — not only how it is beautiful and pleasurable but also how it is effective — you should gain interpretative skills that you can take with you when you explore zones outside the garden of literature.

From the start of your first encounter with a literary work, you begin the process of literary criticism as you formulate questions about the mode (*is this fiction? is it a novel?*), the manner (*who is the narrator? is the style modern, funny?*), and the aims of the text (*is it satiric? is the reader supposed to sympathize with the main character?*). To read the text well, you need to pick up on signals about the way the text is formed, and almost as soon as you have noticed these signals, you begin to explain what they might mean. Your critical reading of a work could start with a simple catalog of its elements: you could name the characters; retell the action; identify the meter and rhyme scheme. By writing these observations down, you might find new details to observe in the process. Your reading and writing about a work could advance a step further with the help of literary terms, such as stanza, narrator, metaphor, because these terms conveniently and quickly identify specific effects and help to connect them to similar techniques or features of other works. A good reader quickly moves from noticing details of a work to interpreting the significance of the way elements are combined in this particular work. A practiced reader, further, compares this work to others, recognizing the characteristics of, say, realist novels or lyrics about love, and noting how this particular example distinguishes itself from others of its genre. Whenever you read, you make crucial

assessments of this sort, perhaps even subconsciously. (Adapted from *The Norton Introduction to Literature* by Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, Kelly J. Mays, pp.1-9)

Exercises

Read the following passage and answer the questions below.

Yu Hua (1960 —)

Yu Hua was born in 1960 in Zhejiang, China. He has published four novels, six collections of stories, and three collections of essays. In 2002 Yu Hua became the first Chinese writer to win the prestigious James Joyce Foundation Award. His novel *To Live* was awarded the Premio Grinzane Cavour (1998) and the novel was adapted for film by Zhang Yimou. *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* were named two of the ten most influential books in 1990s in China.

The Reality in Literature

Yu Hua, Translated by Andrew F. Jones

What is reality in literature? What I want to speak of is not a locomotive passing by a window, or a man strolling by the riverside, nor the falling leaves at the advent of autumn. Of course, these sorts of scenes will often appear in literary narratives. The question is whether or not we will remember these sorts of scenes. A locomotive has passed, never to return to the scene of our reading; the man strolling by the river has left, only to be immediately forgotten; the leaves have fallen and the reader is left unmoved. Although this kind of reality appears in literary narrative, it remains a mere reality in reality, and not yet the reality in literature.

There are a couple of true stories I've read in the Chinese tabloids which may perhaps shed some light on what I mean by the reality in literature. Both incidents are unsettling. The first concerns a head-on collision between two trucks on a national highway, the other a man who jumped from a twenty-story building. These kind of stories take place almost everyday in today's China, and have already become journalistic cliches, and yet they captured my attention, because the noise of the collision was loud enough to knock a flock of sparrows down from the trees by the side of the freeway, and because the force of the impact of the suicidal man who had leapt from the tower was so powerful that his blue jeans were left in tatters across the sidewalk. The sparrows knocked from the trees and the tatters of the blue jeans immediately render these two stories into something out-of-the-ordinary, something startling, something unforgettable. In other words, they allow us to read the reality of literature.

Without the description of these dazed or perhaps dead birds spread across the tarmac, without the description of those scraps of denim on the pavement, even if the head-on collision or the suicide were to be written down in literary form, they would all too easily be lost to memory, for they would merely allow reality to enter into a linguistic system of narrative representation, without producing a specifically literary reality. But the description of birds or tattered jeans scattered across the ground is where literature distinguishes itself from real life and historical incident. It is through this kind of expression that literary reality is established, and without such expression, narrative sinks to the level of a simple diagram of life and incident. This is why real life is always ephemeral, while literature remains forever new.

We know that the reality of literature is established through narrative language. Let's look at a line by the Italian poet Dante. I love more than anything else to read his masterpiece *The Divine Comedy*, for its strangely marvelous symbols and tropes, gently forceful structure, and unhurried manner are without parallel. Dante tells us in one line of poetry that "the arrow hits its target/and leaves the string." Dante here reverses causal relationships by writing first that the arrow hits the target, and only later that it leaves the string. This allows us to feel the velocity inside the words. If we think carefully, we understand that we often encounter such velocity in our everyday lives. The problem is that the logic of reality restricts our ability to feel it. In breaking through pre-existing relations of logic, Dante allows us to see that literary reality is sometimes more real than the reality of our lives.

Another writer from Argentina named Jorge Luis Borges was no less an admirer of the work of Dante than myself. In one very interesting story, he writes about two Borges, the first sixty years old, and the other an old man of eighty. He has the two Borges meet in a carriage on a long journey. Let's take a look at the way he describes the sound of the older Borges' voice. When the younger Borges hears him speak, he thinks to himself "it was the sound I had often heard in recordings of my own voice."

To place the same person in two different times and then let them encounter each other in the same time and same environment no doubt has very little to do with reality. This could only happen in literary reality. Yet I've often read similar kinds of stories by other authors in which a character, now grown old, encounters his younger self, and the two go on to fall in love with the same woman, now contending with one another for her affection, now politely yielding to the other. But I can't really remember any of these amusingly decorative stories, while Borges' story is unforgettable. When the old man speaks and the younger feels as if he's listening to a recording of his own voice, we can imagine what it sounds like: an ancient voice, suffused with feeling, and yet the voice of one's own future. The trope of the tape lets us read a strange and wonderful difference, a difference concealed beneath sameness, and it's precisely the wonder of this difference that makes the description of the encounter between the

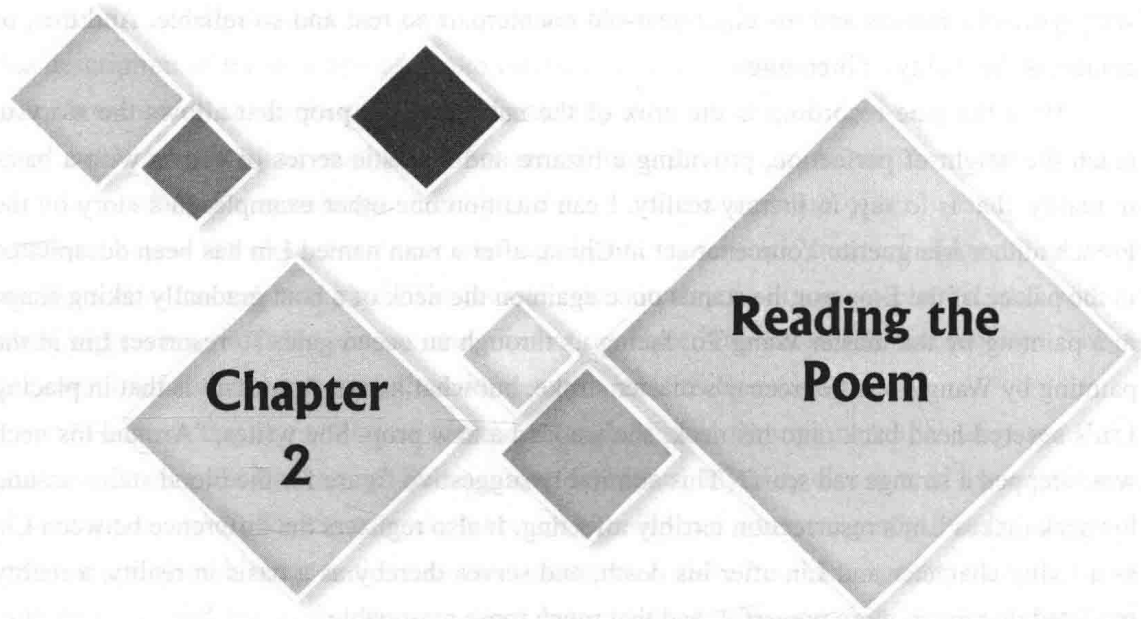
sixty-year-old Borges and his eight-year-old counterpart so real and so reliable. And this, of course, is the reality of literature.

Here the tape recording is the crux of the narrative, the prop that allows the story to reach the height of perfection, providing a bizarre and fantastic series of events with a basis in reality, that is to say, in literary reality. I can mention one other example. In a story by the French author Marguerite Yourcenar set in China, after a man named Lin has been decapitated in the palace of the Emperor, he stands once again on the deck of a boat gradually taking shape in a painting by the master Wang Fo, facing us through an ocean gale. To resurrect Lin in the painting by Wang Fo is Yourcenar's master stroke, but what's most important is that in placing Lin's severed head back onto his neck, she's added a new prop. She writes, "Around his neck was wrapped a strange red scarf." This admirably suggestive figure for the blood stains around his neck makes Lin's resurrection terribly affecting. It also registers the difference between Lin as a living character and Lin after his death, and serves thereby as a basis in reality, a reality rendered that much more powerful, and that much more reasonable.

Dante's arrow, Borges' tape, and Yourcenar's scarf let us understand the superior insight possessed by great writers. People are fond of emphasizing the importance of imagination in literature, but actually, insight is just as important. When imagination soars, it is insight which serves as a rudder. One might even say that without the measure of insight, imagination is merely a nonsensical flight of fancy. Only the perfect alignment of imagination and insight could create Dante's arrow, Borges' tape, or Yourcenar's scarf. And only then do we see the reality of literature of which I have spoken today.

Questions

1. In what ways literature reality is different from the a simple diagram of life and incident?
2. British writer Oscar Wilde says, "Literature always anticipates life. It does not copy it, but molds it to its purpose." In above passage, How does Yu Hua define literature? What is the main elements of literature?



Chapter 2

Reading the Poem

Poetry is characterized by the following elements: a musical effect created by rhythm and sounds, a precise and fresh imagery, and multiple levels of interpretation suggested by the connotation of the closer words and by allusions. A poem, however, should not be regarded as a marriage of technical devices and ideas. The devices should enhance or expose the poem's meaning(s). But, for convenience's sake, the elements of poetry will be focused on separately in this book so that the student can devote his/her attention to the effects achieved by certain poetic convention. The primary purpose of this part is to develop your ability to understand and appreciate poetry. Here are some preliminary suggestions.

1. Read a poem more than once. A good poem will no more yield its full meaning on a single reading than will a Beethoven symphony on a single hearing. Two readings may be necessary simply to let you get your bearings. And if the poem is a work of art, it will repay repeated and prolonged examination. One does not listen to a good piece of music once and forget it; one does not look at a good painting once and throw it away. A poem is not like a newspaper, to be hastily read and cast into the wastebasket. It is to be hung on the wall of one's mind.

2. Keep a dictionary by you and use it. It is futile to try to understand poetry without troubling to learn the meanings of the words of which it is composed. One might as well attempt to play tennis without a ball. One of your primary purposes while in college should be to build a good vocabulary, and the study of poetry gives you an excellent opportunity. A few other reference books will also be invaluable. Particularly desirable are a good book on mythology (your instructor can recommend one) and a Bible.

3. Read so as to hear the sounds of the words in your mind. Poetry is written to be heard: its meanings are conveyed through sound as well as through print. Every word is therefore important. The best way to read a poem is just the opposite of the best way to read a newspaper. One reads a newspaper as rapidly as possible; one should read a poem as slowly as possible. When you cannot read a poem aloud, lip-read it: form the words with your tongue and mouth though you do not utter them. With ordinary reading material, lip reading is a bad habit; with poetry it is a good habit.

4. Always pay careful attention to what the poem is saying. Though one should be conscious of the sounds of the poem, he should never be so exclusively conscious of them that he pays no attention to what the poem means. For some readers reading a poem is like getting on board a rhythmical roller coaster. The car starts, and off they go, up and down, paying no attention to the landscape flashing past them, arriving at the end of the poem breathless, with no idea of what it has been about. This is the wrong way to read a poem. One should make the utmost effort to follow the thought continuously and to grasp the full implications and suggestions. Because a poem says so much, several readings may be necessary, but on the very first reading one should determine which noun goes with which verb.

5. Practice reading poems aloud. When you find one you especially like, make your roommate or a friend listen to it. Try to read it to him in such a way that he will like it too. (a) Read it affectionately, but not affectedly. The two extremes oral readers often fall into are equally deadly. One is to read as if one were reading a tax report or a railroad timetable, unexpressively, in a monotone. The other is to elocute, with artificial flourishes and vocal histrionics. It is not necessary to put emotion into reading a poem. The emotion is already there. It only wants a fair chance to get out. It will express itself if the poem is read naturally and sensitively. (b) Of the two extremes, reading too fast offers greater danger than reading too slow. Read slowly enough that each word is clear and distinct and that the meaning has time to sink in. Remember that your roommate does not have the advantage, as you do, of having the text before him. Your ordinary rate of reading will probably be too fast. (c) Read the poem so that the rhythmical pattern is felt but not exaggerated. Remember that poetry is written in sentences, just as prose is, and that punctuation is a signal as to how it should be read. Give all grammatical pauses their full due. Do not distort the natural pronunciation of words of a normal accentuation of the sentence to fit into what you have decided is its metrical pattern. One of the worst ways to read a poem is to read it ta-dum ta-dum ta-dum with an exaggerated emphasis on every other syllable. On the other hand, it should not be read as if it were prose. An important test of your reading will be how you handle the end of a line when there is no punctuation there. A frequent mistake of the beginning reader is to treat each line as if it were a complete thought, whether grammatically complete or not, and to drop his voice at the end of it. A frequent mistake of the sophisticated reader is to take a running start upon approaching

the end of a line and fly over it as if it were not there. The line is a rhythmical unit, and its end should be observed whether there is punctuation or not. If there is no punctuation, one observes it ordinarily by the slightest of pauses or by holding onto the last word in the line just a little longer than usual. One should not drop his voice. In line 12 of the following poem, one should hold onto the word “although” longer than if it occurred elsewhere in the line. But one should not lower his voice on it: it is part of the clause that follows in the next stanza.

Thomas Hardy (1840 — 1928)

Thomas Hardy was an English novelist and poet. He wrote poetry throughout his life and regarded himself primarily as a poet, and his first collection was not published until 1898. Initially, therefore, he gained fame as the author of novels, including *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). However, beginning in the 1950s Hardy has been recognised as a major poet; he had a significant influence on the Movement poets of the 1950s and 1960s.

The Man He Killed

Thomas Hardy

Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

I shot him dead because —
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like — just as I —

Was out of work — had sold his traps —
No other reason why.

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat, if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.

Commentary

To aid us in the understanding of a poem, we may ask ourselves a number of questions about it. One of the most important is “Who is the speaker and what is the occasion?” A cardinal error of beginning readers is to assume always that the speaker is always the poet himself. For even when the poet does speak directly and express his own thoughts and emotions, he does so ordinarily as a representative human being rather than as an individual who lives at a particular address, dislikes dill pickles, and favors blue neckties. We must always be cautious about identifying anything in a poem with the biography of the poet. Like the novelist and the playwright, he is fully justified in changing actual details of his own experience to make the experience of the poem more universal. We may well think of every poem, therefore, as being to some degree dramatic, that is, the utterance of a fictional character rather than of the poet himself. Many poems are expressly dramatic.

In *The Man He Killed*, the speaker is a soldier; the occasion is his having been in battle and killed a man — obviously for the first time in his life. We can tell a good deal about him. He is not a career soldier: he enlisted only because he was out of work. He is a workingman: he speaks a simple and colloquial language (“nipperkin” “list” “off hand like” “traps”), and he has sold the tools of his trade — he may have been a tinker or plumber. He is a friendly, kindly sort who enjoys a neighborly drink of ale in a bar and will gladly lend a friend a half crown when he has it. He has known what it is to be poor. In any other circumstances he would have been horrified at taking a human life. He has been given pause as it is. He is trying to figure it out. But he is not a deep thinker and thinks he has supplied a reason when he has only supplied a name: “I killed the man ... because he was my foe.” The critical question, of course, is “Why was the man his ‘foe’?” Even the speaker is left unsatisfied by his answer, though he is not analytical enough to know what is wrong with it. Obviously this poem is expressly dramatic. We need know nothing about Thomas Hardy’s life (he was never a soldier and never killed a man) to realize that the poem is dramatic. The internal evidence of the poem tells us so.

A second important question that we should ask ourselves upon reading any poem is “What is the central purpose of the poem?” The purpose may be to tell a story, to reveal human

character, to impart a vivid impression of a scene, to express a mood or an emotion, or to convey to us vividly some idea or attitude. Whatever the purpose is, we must determine it for ourselves and define it mentally as precisely as possible. Only then can we fully understand the function and meaning of the various details in the poem, by relating them to this central purpose. Only then can we begin to assess the value of the poem and determine whether it is a good one or a poor one. In *The Man He Killed*, the central purpose is quite clear: it is to make us realize more keenly the irrationality of war. The puzzlement of the speaker may be our puzzlement. But even if we are able to give a more sophisticated answer than his as to why men kill each other, we ought still to have a greater awareness, after reading the poem, of the fundamental irrationality in war that makes men kill who have no grudge against each other and who might under different circumstances show each other considerable kindness. (Adapted from *Sound and Sense*, pp.19-28, by Laurence Perrine, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977)

Exercises

Read the following poem and answer the questions below.

William Shakespeare (1564 — 1616)

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. His father was a trader in agricultural products and manufactured articles and later became alderman. Shakespeare went to the grammar school at Stratford. He was married to a yeoman's daughter, Anne Hathaway, in 1582. Between 1585 and 1586 he left Stratford for London to evade a persecution by Sir Thomas Lucy, a rich landlord and county magistrate who accused Shakespeare for writing a satirical ballad to smear his character. Shakespeare allegedly composed the ballad to readdress a severe punishment he received for stealing the magistrate's deer.

Shortly after his arrival in London, Shakespeare got employment either in or near a theater, taking care of gentlemen's horses or serving as prompter's assistant. Then he became an actor and later he started to write plays, either in collaboration with other playwrights or revising old plays of others. By the end of the 16th century Shakespeare already gained the popularity of a successful playwright of both tragedies and comedies. Later he became the shareholder of the theater. In 1612 he retired from the stage and went back to live in his native town at Stratford.

Shakespeare's complete works include 37 plays, 2 narrative poems and 154 sonnets. The first complete edition of his writings was published by his fellow-players and friends in 1623.

Sonnet 18

William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven¹ shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed²;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,³
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Notes

1. the eye of heaven: referring to the sun
2. untrimmed: stripped of beauty
3. Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade: Nor shall death boast that you roam about in his darkness, i.e., you shall not fall under the threat of death. Here "death" is personified.

Questions

1. Who is "thee" in the poem? What do the metaphors in Lines 1 — 8 assert? Why does the speaker emphasize life's brevity?
2. The last two lines says, "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee," do you think the poem really can do this?