

## Superb Sonnets

**LA.E.1.4.1** The student identifies the characteristics that distinguish literary forms.

**Sonnet** – a fourteen-line poem, usually written in iambic pentameter, that has one of two basic structures.

### **Petrarchan (or Italian) Sonnet**

(named for the 14<sup>th</sup> century poet Petrarch)

- has **14 lines**
- 1<sup>st</sup> eight lines are called the **octave**
- the **octave** asks a question or poses a problem
- last six lines are called the **sestet**
- the **sestet** responds to the question or problem
- **Rhyme Scheme:** abba, abba, cde, cde (this is the traditional rhyme scheme, but often a Petrarchan sonnet will have slight variations in the rhyme scheme.)

Example of a Petrarchan Sonnet:

“The Cross of Snow” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
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Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text

<http://www.sonnets.org>

### **Shakespearean (or English) Sonnet**

(named for William Shakespeare – a master in this form)

- has **14 lines**
- 3 stanzas of four lines each called **quatrains**

- last two lines are called the **couplet**
- **Rhyme Scheme:** abab, cdcd, efef, gg (this is the traditional rhyme scheme, but often a Shakespearean sonnet will have slight variations in the rhyme scheme.)
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Example of a Shakespearean Sonnet:

“If I should learn, in some quite casual way” By: Edna St. Vincent Millay

Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
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<http://www.sonnets.org>

## Sonnet Search

**LA.E.1.4.1** The student identifies the characteristics that distinguish literary forms.

I. Directions: For each of the following poems, **label the rhyme scheme**. Then **identify** whether or not the poem is a sonnet. If it is a sonnet, **identify** which type of sonnet it is and **explain** how you know in the “Comments” area. Refer to your notes on sonnets as needed.

### 1. “Range-Finding” by Robert Frost

**Your Comments:**

Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
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<http://www.sonnets.org>

### 2. “Richard Cory” By: Edwin Arlington Robinson

**Your Comments:**

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Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text text

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<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/poems/robnea4.html>

**3. “To Science” by Edgar Allen Poe**

**Your Comments :**

Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
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**4. “How Do I Love Thee?” By Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

**Your Comments:**

Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
Text text text text text text text  
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Text text text text text text text  
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II. Directions: Write your own original sonnet using one of the two forms (Petrarchan or Shakespearean). Identify which form you have chosen. Be sure to include all the necessary elements for the form you choose. Refer to your notes on sonnets as needed.

## Sonnet Search

### Answer Key for Recommended Sonnets

#### I.

1. "Range-Finding" by Robert Frost

Rhyme Scheme: abba abba cc dd ee

Petrarchan (or Italian) sonnet

14 lines

Octave and Sestet written together in one stanza

Non-traditional rhyme scheme, but similar to traditional rhyme scheme

2. "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson

Rhyme Scheme: abab, cdcd, efef, ggh

Not a sonnet

16 lines

3. "To Science" by Edgar Allen Poe

Rhyme Scheme: abab bcbc dede ff

Shakespearean (or English) sonnet

14 lines

3 quatrains and 1 couplet written together in one stanza

Non-traditional rhyme scheme, but similar to traditional rhyme scheme

4. "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Rhyme Scheme: abba, abba, cdc, dcd (note: the second "a" in the first stanza is a near rhyme)

Petrarchan Sonnet

14 lines

Octave

Sestet

Non standard rhyme scheme, but similar to traditional rhyme scheme

II. The student's original sonnet should be identified as either Petrarchan or Shakespearean and should meet the criteria for the form they have chosen. See handout for specific criteria for each form. Encourage students to use traditional rhyme schemes, but be willing to accept slight variations if all the other criteria are met, since several of the sonnets on the worksheet did not have traditional rhyme schemes.