

Whoso List to Hunt

By Sir Thomas Wyatt 1503-1542

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, hélas, I may no more.

The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that farthest cometh behind.

Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,

Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.

Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain.

And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about:
Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

Whoever Loves to Hunt

Modernized by Michael R. Burch

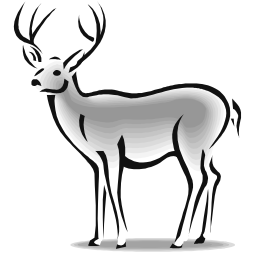
Whoever loves to hunt, I know the hind;
but as for me, alas!, I may no more.

Pursuit of her has left me so bone-sore,
I'm one of those who lags the furthest behind.

Yet friend, how can I draw my anguished mind
away from the deer? Thus, as she flees before
me, fainting I follow. I must leave off therefore,
since in a net I seek to hold the wind.

Whoever seeks her out, I put him out of doubt,
that like me, he must spend his time in vain.

For graven with diamonds, set in letters plain,
these words appear, her fair neck ringed about:
Touch me not, for Caesar's I am,
And wild to hold, though I seem tame.



“Whoso List to Hunt” is a sonnet written by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the early 16th century and was first published in 1557 in London in an anthology of poems entitled *Songes and Sonettes Written by the Ryght Honorable Lord Henry Howard, late Earle of Surrey, and others published by Richard Tottel*. The poem, an alternate title of which is, “The Lover Despairing to Attain Unto His Lady’s Grace Relinquisheth the Pursuit,” is commonly thought to be written for Anne Boleyn.

Read and compare the original and modernized version of the poem, noting the figures of speech in the text. Mark any examples of metaphor, specific diction, alliteration, allusion, and figurative language in the poem and be to ready to discuss how it changes the themes and tone of the work.

What is a sonnet? A sonnet is a poem written in a specific format.

The English word “sonnet” comes from the Italian word “sonetto,” meaning “little song.” Early versions of sonnets, which originated in Sicily in the thirteenth century, were often set to music and usually accompanied by a lute. Traditionally, sonnets were written on the theme of love—especially unattainable love.

The poet Francisco Petrarch, a Roman Catholic priest, popularized the sonnet form that we now call a Petrarchan Sonnet. The Petrarchan Sonnet consists of an eight-line stanza (octave) followed by a six-line stanza (sestet). The octave always follows a pattern of ABBA, ABBA, while the sestet can change.

The sonnet form was introduced in England by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Translating Italian sonnets including those by Petrarch and Dante Alighieri and writing some of their own, they established an English form of the sonnet that Shakespeare would perfect.

The English or Shakespearian Sonnet consists of 14 lines and is written in iambic pentameter. The simplest pattern of all the sonnets, the English sonnet consists of 3 quatrains (four lines) and a couplet.

A B A B First quatrain (lines 1-4)

C D C D Second Quatrain (lines 5-8)

E F E F Third Quatrain (Lines 9-12)

G G Couplet (Lines 13-14)

Romeo and Juliet speak a sonnet to each other in Act 1, scene 5. This is one of the first examples of the poetry in the play and follows traditional English rules:

A If I Profane with my unwortheist hand

B This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:

A My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

B To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

C Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

D Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

C For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

D And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

E Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

F Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

E O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;

F They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair

G Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

G Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

