



The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition
SUGGESTED SONNETS LIST

Below are some sonnets suggested for recitation by The English-Speaking Union's Education Department. Remember that only students representing their school at their local English-Speaking Union Branch Competition must perform a sonnet. Students can select a sonnet from this list or choose their own selection from Shakespeare's 154 sonnet cycle. All of the sonnets are available for free online courtesy of The Folger Shakespeare Library at www.folgerdigitaltexts.org. Note: No cutting of the sonnet is allowed (i.e. students must perform the complete sonnet).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some ESU Branches require students to select a sonnet from a specific list of provided by them. Please check with your local ESU Branch Shakespeare Coordinator to see if this is the case for you.

First Line	Sonnet #	First Line	Sonnet #
When forty winters shall besiege thy brow	2	Why is my verse so barren of new pride	76
Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?	8	So oft have I invoc'd thee for my muse	78
For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any,	10	I never saw that you did painting need	83
When I do count the clock that tells the time	12	Then hate me when thou wilt, if ever, now,	90
Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck,	14	Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,	91
When I consider everything that grows	15	How like a winter hath my absence been	97
Who will believe my verse in time to come	17	My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming	102
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	18	To me, fair friend, you never can be old,	104
A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted	20	Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,	113
As an unperfect actor on the stage	23	Let me not to the marriage of true minds	116
Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,	27	That you were once unkind befriends me now,	120
When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes	29	'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,	121
When to the sessions of sweet silent thought	30	If my dear love were but the child of state,	124
Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day	34	O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power	126
Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all.	40	Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame	129
When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,	43	My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;	130
What is your substance, whereof are you made,	53	Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,	131
O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem	54	When my love swears she is made of truth	138
Not marble nor the gilded [monuments]	55	Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press	140
Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,	60	In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,	141
Is it thy will thy image should keep open	61	Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch	143
Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye	62	Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,	144
Against my love shall be, as I am now,	63	Those lips that Love's own hand did make	145
Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea	65	My love is as a fever, longing still	147
Tired with all these, for restful death I cry:	66	O me, what eyes hath love put in my head,	148
Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view	69	Canst thou, O cruel, say I love thee not	149
No longer mourn for me when I am dead	71	The little love-god, lying once asleep,	154

