

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Practice with Poetry—High School

**Read “Sonnet 138” by William Shakespeare and answer the questions that follow.**

When my love swears that she is made of truth  
I do believe her, though I know she lies,  
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,  
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.  
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
Although she knows my days are past the best,  
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue:  
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.  
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
And age in love loves not to have years told:  
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

1. Explain why this poem is a sonnet.
2. Is the speaker in this poem young or old? Explain how you know, using evidence from the poem.
3. In what way does the speaker's love lie to him? Explain using evidence from the poem.
4. In what way does the speaker lie to his love? Explain using evidence from the poem.
5. Explain the meaning of the line “love's best habit is in seeming trust.”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Answers--Practice with Poetry—High School

**Read “Sonnet 138” by William Shakespeare and answer the questions that follow.**

When my love swears that she is made of truth  
I do believe her, though I know she lies,  
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,  
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.  
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
Although she knows my days are past the best,  
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue:  
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.  
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
And age in love loves not to have years told:  
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

1. Explain why this poem is a sonnet.

*A sonnet is written in iambic pentameter—lines of 10 syllables with alternating emphasis. Also, a Shakespearean sonnet has a specific rhyme scheme: ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG. This poem has both of those characteristics.*

2. Is the speaker in this poem young or old? Explain how you know, using evidence from the poem.

*The speaker is old. He says of his love, “Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young / although she knows my days are past the best.” His love says that he is young, but he is saying that he knows that she has a “false speaking tongue,” even though he pretends he believes her.*

3. In what way does the speaker’s love lie to him? Explain using evidence from the poem.

*She lies about his age. He says of her, “she thinks me young / although she knows my days are past the best.” So, she knows he is old, but she lies to him by saying that he is young.*

4. In what way does the speaker lie to his love? Explain using evidence from the poem.

*He does not call her on her lie. He says, “And wherefore say not I that I am old?” Instead of telling her that he knows she is lying to him, he pretends that he believes her—he does not “credit her false speaking tongue.”*

5. Explain the meaning of the line “love’s best habit is in seeming trust.”

*When we love someone, we give them the benefit of the doubt, even when we know they are flattering us. So, because he loves her, and she him, they put on the appearance of believing the flattering lies of the other one.*