

AMORETTI QUESTIONS

Read all the poems and all the questions below. Type up your answers to the questions assigned to your group. Offer support where it is necessary. Use the OED to evaluate word choices (from www.lib.ku.edu). You may also wish to use “How to Read a Poem” to focus your reading.

Turn in your responses at the beginning of class.

If one group has too few members, I may ask you to join another group in class, so you should have some basic familiarity with *each sonnet*.

Group Members are listed in the Blackboard Assignment Window.

GROUP 1: Sonnet 1

1. To what dictionary definition of “leaves” (line 1), “lines” (line 5), and “rymes [rhymes]” (line 9) is the speaker referring? [Use the OED]
2. According to the speaker, the “leaves,” “lines” and “rymes” would be “happy” under what circumstances?
3. How does the content change in each quatrain?
4. What does the speaker say in the last two lines? How is the content of the couplet different from the rest of the poem?
5. What are the key images in the poem, and how does the speaker use them to convey his point?

GROUP 2: Sonnet 34

1. What is the primary image for the lover? For his beloved?
2. What is the speaker’s hope in the third quatrain?
3. What is the storm? What words prompt your reading?
4. The source for this is a Petrarchan sonnet (Rima 189) that ends with the lover in panic and despair. How is Spenser’s conclusion different? [Rima 189 is on p. 597; see the prose translation, not Wyatt’s version]
5. How does alliteration impact the poem? E.g., Do certain words that carry the same tone or idea begin with the same letters? What is the effect?

GROUP 3: Sonnet 64

1. What situation provides the starting point of this sonnet (line 1)?
2. This sonnet is a “blazon”, a poem of systematic praise that lists many separate details. This is a typical Renaissance blazon in that it praises the different parts of a woman’s body. What two or three things do all the comparisons in this poem have in common?
3. How does the blazon progress? (Where does it start? Where does it end?) How is the progression meaningful?
4. The couplet does not continue the blazon but instead provides a shift in meaning. What does the couplet say? How does this add to the praise of the woman?
5. What are the key images or metaphors in this sonnet? Does anything strike you as odd?

GROUP 4: Sonnet 67

1. How is the speaker of this poem different from Petrarch’s or Wyatt’s?
2. How is his quarry different? To whom does she belong?
3. To whom does the phrase “yet halfe trembling” refer? Speaker or deer? How do you know?
4. *How* does he capture the deer? (e.g. by force? by cleverness? by some other means?)
5. What does this poem suggest about male-female relationships?

GROUP 5: Sonnet 75

1. Unlike the other assigned, Sonnet 75 tells a personal narrative. What events are narrated in lines 1-4? What effect do these lines have?
2. What is the woman’s assertion in lines 5-8? What does she mean by *vayne/vaine* (OED!)?
3. What is the speaker’s opposing argument in lines 9-14?
4. What claim does the poem make about the power of poetry?
5. Do you think poetry accomplishes the goal that Spenser claims for it?

ENGLISH 312
SIDNEY ASSIGNMENT

Sidney on Poetry:

“[Nature’s] world is brazen [made of brass], the poets only deliver a golden [world]” – Sidney’s *Defense of Poesy* (957).

After discussing how scientists and doctors can be wrong, and thus considered liars: “Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth” – Sidney’s *Defense of Poesy* (968)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Astrophil and Stella

There are two parts to this assignment. Your assignments should be typed up and brought to class on Sidney Day.

Part One Sonnet 1

The speaker describes his difficulty in finding poetic models and inspiration. Respond:

1. According to the first quatrain, lines 1-4, what is the speaker’s purpose in writing poetry?
2. According to the second quatrain, lines 5-8, what techniques does he use to try to get poetic inspiration?
3. According to the third quatrain, lines 9-12, what are the results of using these techniques?
4. According to the couplet, lines 13-14, what does the speaker finally realize is the right way to write poetry that will fulfill his purpose?
5. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? Does it fit the criteria for either an English sonnet or a Spenserian sonnet?

Part Two Sonnet 2, 9, 74, or 108

1. Read the Sonnet assigned to your group.
2. Rewrite it line by line into a smooth prose paraphrase, and do not omit any images or important concepts.
3. Choose one other assigned sonnet and do the same.

Example: Spenser’s Sonnet 64, lines 1-4.

As I was going to kiss her lips (such grace I found there), it seemed to me that I smelled a garden of sweet flowers that all emitted dainty odors. These flowers would be appropriate for young ladies to decorate their lovers’ bedrooms.... [and so on, and so forth]