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IB English Commentary:

Diana Gu

Shakespeare's Sonnet 116

Shakespeare's love sonnets describe three different contexts in which love operates and, as such, he depicts a multi-faceted picture of love. Love in Shakespeare's poems does not have a single definition, but rather, an intangible complementation of characteristics that, together, make up an ever-powerful force that "weathers" all obstacles. In Shakespeare's Sonnet number 116 love is depicted as an overwhelming force that triumphs over time, the physical world, and reason.

Sonnet 116 consists of 14 lines, each with 10 stressed and unstressed syllables known as iambic pentameter, with a set rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. This rhyme sequence is set in the usual structure of the sonnet of three quatrains and concludes with a rhyming couplet. This style creates a flowing lyrical effect that highlights and emphasizes important themes in the sonnet. The use of lines in this sonnet also create his effect, as well as having control over our reading.

It is usual for there to be a pause for thought in the sonnet's message at the end of each quatrain, especially the second, in order to add tension, with the sonnet resolving its objective in the final couplet, just as a song normally resolves to rest chords at the close. To convey the sense of resolution and completeness at the end of the sonnet there are often key words, or the words, present in the closing couplet that are also present in the earlier quatrains. This structuring provides a framework on which to build the words, phrases, themes, rhymes, synecdoche, punctuation and rhythm of the sonnet making it, at its best, a well-constructed work of art.

In former times sonnet 116 was almost universally read as a paean to ideal and eternal love which neither could nor should be denied, and that the same theme of perfection is

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