



Sonnet 12

When I do count the clock that tells time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls o'er-silver'd all with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard:
Then of thy beauty do I question make
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing against Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence

Quatrain 1

Shakespeare speaks of the passing of the time and the aging of beautiful things. A brave day becomes night, a violet begins to wilt and black hair turns grey. Eventually all living things will pass from their prime.

Quatrain 2

Tall trees that shaded from the heat lose their leaves in autumn and grain that has grown over summer is harvested in the fall. Everything will go through stages of growth, like the seasons, and eventually die.

Quatrain 3

The speaker realizes that beauty fades like violets, hair, leaves and grass. The woman he speaks about is in her prime and has great beauty but will eventually lose her looks to time.

Couplet

Nothing can defend itself against Time's scythe, except to have offspring to defy him when he come to claim you.