

Sonnet 12 follows the structure of a typical Shakespearean sonnet.[5] It consists of 14 lines of which 12 belong to three quatrains and the last two belong to the couplet, with rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Reflecting this structure, the first three quatrains develop an argument of despair, and the couplet suggests a (somewhat) hopeful resolution. However, the argument of the poem may also be seen as reflecting the older structure of the Petrarchan sonnet: lines one through eight are the octave[6] which concerns the decay that occurs in nature, and these lines are connected through alliteration.[7] Lines nine through fourteen form a rhetorical sestet [6] concerning the decay of the beloved.