Unit 4 — Shakespeare in Extract — Teacher copy

Track E · Klasse 12 · Niveau E (Basisfach / Leistungsfach)

Niveau E

1. Reading

Read the text and use it for the activities below.

Reading — Sonnet 73, ll. 1-4

That time of year thou mayst in me behold, When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

Vocabulary — Early Modern engagement

syntactic inversion, periphrasis, metonymy, synecdoche, conceit, volta (the turn), iambic pentameter, Shakespearean (English) sonnet form: 3 quatrains + couplet (abab cdcd efef gg).

Close-reading move set

1. **Form** — what does the form do that prose cannot?
2. **Voice** — who is speaking, to whom?
3. **One figurative move** — pick the most loaded metaphor / image / inversion.
4. **Volta** — where does the poem turn?

2. Practise

Niveau E — controlled

1. Modern word-order: *That time of year thou mayst in me behold* → ___ .
2. Match: volta → the turn; conceit → extended metaphor; synecdoche → part standing for whole.

Niveau E — productive

3. Identify in Sonnet 73, ll. 1-4: form, voice, one figurative move, the implied volta location.

3. Your turn

Literary essay, 400 words. Sustained close reading of Sonnet 73. Use 4 integrated quotes + 6 academic discourse markers + 1 cleft + literary-analysis vocabulary throughout.

Sample

Sonnet 73 is, on the surface, a poem about an ageing speaker watching late autumn from inside his own body. Beneath the surface, it is a sustained argument that the addressee should love the speaker more, not less, *because* the time is shorter. The argument is built across three quatrains, each offering a more compressed image of diminution. The first quatrain — *"that time of year thou mayst in me behold"* — opens with syntactic inversion that places the season-as-mirror image first. The yellowed leaves are not merely few; they are *"yellow leaves, or none, or few"*, a tightening rhythm that enacts the loss it names. Accordingly, the line *"bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang"* is the quatrain's most loaded image: the choir-stalls of a ruined abbey stand, by metonymy, for the boughs themselves, but the ruination also recalls the dissolution of the monasteries — historical violence sitting inside an image of personal mortality. By contrast, the second quatrain narrows to twilight (a single day's loss); the third narrows further to the dying fire (an hour's). It is precisely this acceleration that earns the volta in the final couplet: *"This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong, / To love that well which thou must leave ere long."* In this regard, the poem's thesis is structural rather than ornamental: love is *intensified* by an honest reading of time. More specifically, the couplet refuses sentimentality. The speaker does not ask the addressee for grief; he asks for *recognition* of what the foreshortened time makes of the love itself. Sonnet 73 is, finally, the argumentative form (Shakespearean sonnet: 3 quatrains + couplet) doing what only this form can — building a case across three increasingly tight images and resolving it in two perfectly weighted lines.

4. Further reading / listening

- Stephen Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* — accessible annotations.
- Don Paterson, *Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

5. Teacher answer key

Controlled. 1. *You may behold that time of year in me.*

2. all true.

Productive. 3. Form: Shakespearean sonnet, opening quatrain, iambic pentameter. Voice: aging speaker addressing a younger beloved. Figurative move: the speaker as *late autumn tree — bare ruined choirs* (synecdoche / metonymy: choir-stalls of a ruined abbey for the boughs themselves). Volta: at line 13 (*This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong*).