# Audio file – “Sonnet 55”

[24-Track-24.mp3](https://neagov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/travisd_arts_gov/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/24-Track-24.mp3)

Dana Gioia

Although the sonnet was invented in Renaissance Italy, over the past 500 years it has become the most popular form of English language poetry. A sonnet consists of 14 lines of rhymed iambic pentameter, but the reason it is popular is that poets discovered right away that it was the perfect vessel to express intense emotion, especially about love and romance and all the problems that they bring.

The most famous writer of sonnets in English is William Shakespeare. Here is James Earl Jones reading Shakespeare's Sonnet 55:

James Earl Jones

Not marble nor the gilded monuments

Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,

But you shall shine more bright in these contents

Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.

When wasteful war shall statues overturn,

And broils root out the work of masonry,

Nor Mars his sword nor war’s quick fire shall burn

The living record of your memory.

’Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity

Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room

Even in the eyes of all posterity

That wear this world out to the ending doom.

 So, till the Judgement that yourself arise,

 You live in this, and dwell in lovers’ eyes.