**Objectives**
Understand the structure of a sonnet.
Explore strategies for composing a sonnet.
Write a sonnet, quatrain, or couplet of your own.

**Warm-Up**
Play a game where students read 'pop sonnets' and guess the song they were based on.

**Discussion**
Compare and contrast a pop sonnet with the original song’s lyrics.

**Discussion**
Analyze the structure of the sonnet.

**Activity**
Have students write their own Shakespearean reinterpretations.

**Resources**
Pen and paper
Thesaurus or equivalent Web site (e.g., collinsdictionary.com)
Rhyming dictionary or Web site (e.g., rhymezone.com)
List of songs or film quotes for inspiration (optional)

To aid the dialogue, select a song the class is already familiar with.
Discussion prompts may include:
- In what ways does the sonnet differ from the original?
- What, if anything, makes the sonnet version humorous?
- How does the use of antiquated pronouns and verb forms contribute to the reinterpretation of the song’s message?

Discussion prompts may include:
- What makes a sonnet? (Identify line and syllable count, rhyme scheme, and rhythmic structure.)
- What irregularities exist in the language? Why do these exist?
- Does the rhythm support the semantics? If so, how?
- Compare matching lines between the sonnet and the song. What strategies are used to reinterpret lyrics into a sonnet form? (Examples include syntactic rearrangement (i.e., changing word and phrase order); use of synonyms to change syllable count and stress; and expansion, contraction, and consolidation of phrases or ideas.)

Song lyrics are wonderful for full sonnets. If time or difficulty are an issue, parts of lyrics or film quotes may be transformed into quatrains or couplets. Encourage use of thesauruses and rhyming dictionaries, as well as tapping or counting out rhythms.
EXAMPLE SONNET.

Here are two examples of 'pop sonnets' with annotations from the author and the relevant parts of the original lyrics. You need not use these sonnets, particularly if they do not resonate with your class. Other sonnets can be found in the book Pop Sonnets as well as its accompanying blog at popsonnet.tumblr.com.

A lonely maiden from a hamlet small;
a boy within a woeful city rear’d –
they both at midnight left their ports of call
t’ward any destination volunteer’d.
A public-house is where their journeys end,
where patrons’ pipes burn long and minstrels play.
The darken’d hours hath made them more than friends,
the other’s smile inviting each to stay.
Look ye on those who wander through the streets
beneath the lamplight, searching for a soul –
they comb the darken’d night in hope to meet
the sweet companion that shall make them whole.
— Ensure thy heart won’t let their spirit leave;
’tis most important thou dost e’er believe.

Line 1 deliberately uses the word “hamlet” as a nod to Shakespeare.

Lines 3 and 4 are an example of condensing the lyrics; rather than repeating “[he or she] took the midnight train going anywhere” as the song does, the phrase is used once in reference to both characters.

Line 5 uses the word “journeys” as a nod to the original artist, the band Journey.

Line 12 adds details to the motivation of the 'streetlight people' in the song for the sake of rhetorical clarity. Similarly, line 13 gives motivation to the titular command of “don’t stop believing” in order to provide continuity through the sonnet.
My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the stars; they’ve brighter shine than all those overhead. Her hair’s cascade her visage never mars but effortlessly frames her face instead. And yet, if I should tell her what I see—that she hath been by Aphrodite bless’d—she’d quietly demur and disagree and I shall with these words sincere protest: “When I observe thy countenance’s grace, I see no fault – no flaw one might repair; and when a smile blossoms ’cross thy face, the world takes heed and stops to fondly stare. – No words could e’er sufficiently impart all thy perfection, just the way thou art.”

Line 1 is nearly identical to the opening line of Sonnet 130 (“My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun”). Sonnet 130 continues on by describing the narrator’s love in a less-than-flattering light. In contrast, this sonnet uses the line as the set-up to extreme flattery.

Line 3 ends with the word “mars,” a verb meaning “to impair the appearance of,” but is also used as a reference to the original artist, Bruno Mars.

Line 5 includes a reference to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. Shakespeare often used references to classical mythology in his work.

Lines 3 and 8 feature some syntactic oddities. Line 3 places the direct object before the verb that modifies it; line 8 also places the verb at the end of the sentence. In both cases, this was done to fit the rhyme scheme and adhere to the iambic rhythm.

Line 11 features the word “’cross,” an abbreviation of “across;” similarly, line 13 features the word “e’er,” an abbreviation of “ever.” Shakespeare often elided words to fit the meter or focus attention in a passage.

Line 14 quotes the title lyric “just the way you are,” with “are” changed to the antiquated “art” for comedic effect.
Journey, “Don't Stop Believin’”
Just a small town girl livin' in a lonely world
She took the midnight train goin' anywhere
Just a city boy born and raised in South Detroit
He took the midnight train goin' anywhere
A singer in a smokey room
The smell of wine and cheap perfume
For a smile they can share the night
It goes on and on and on and on
Strangers waiting up and down the boulevard
Their shadows searching in the night
Streetlight people, livin' just to find emotion
Hidin' somewhere in the night
Workin' hard to get my fill
Everybody wants a thrill
Payin' anything to roll the dice just one more time
Some will win, some will lose
Some were born to sing the blues
Oh, the movie never ends
It goes on and on and on and on
Don't stop believin', hold on to that feelin'
Streetlight people
Don't stop believin', hold on
Streetlight people

Bruno Mars, “Just the Way You Are”
Oh, her eyes, her eyes make the stars look like they're not shining
Her hair, her hair falls perfectly without her trying
She's so beautiful
And I tell her everyday
Yeah, I know, I know when I compliment her, she won't believe me
And it's so, it's so sad to think that she doesn't see what I see
But every time she ask me do I look okay?
I say
When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
'Cause you're amazing
Just the way you are
And when you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are