



Sonnet 2

by William Shakespeare

In a Nutshell

[William Shakespeare](#) wrote a total of a 154 sonnets, which were published together in 1609. This sonnet was the second in that bunch, and it's one of many that are addressed to a mysterious young man who is often called the "Fair Youth." No one can say for sure who this guy was, or even if he really existed, but many scholars think he was a young nobleman whom Shakespeare would have known.

Another important thing to know about Sonnet 2 is that it's one of seventeen that are called "the procreation sonnets." Procreation, as you might know, is just a fancy word for having babies. So this sonnet, along with the one that comes before it and the fifteen that come after it, are all about trying to get this young man to marry and have a kid.

Now maybe you've heard about parents nagging their grown children to get married, and maybe you've even had that happen to you. We imagine that things weren't all that different back in Shakespeare's day. The thing to remember here, though, is that if this particular young man were a nobleman, the stakes would have been a lot higher. When he got old enough, a man like this would have inherited vast wealth. To keep that wealth in the family, and to keep his bloodline going, he needed to produce an heir. What this means is that a young nobleman's plans for having kids were a big deal, and there were personal and political consequences if he didn't manage to pull it off.

Why Should I Care?

Has a friend ever lectured you about something you should be doing differently? Maybe your friend didn't like the person you were dating, or wanted to encourage you to try out for a sport the you weren't interested in. We've all had lectures from parents and teachers, telling us to try harder, pay more attention, think more before acting, etc. Maybe you've even been in the position of having to talk to someone else like that. Well, if any of those above things are true, [Shakespeare](#) knows exactly what you've been through.

Sonnet 2 is all about those tough times where you have to sit down with someone and have "the talk." Now usually "the talk" is long, rambling, and kind of boring. But that's because you didn't get "the talk" from the greatest genius in the history of Western literature! Seriously, Shakespeare takes us on a tour of beautiful images, neat metaphors, and even the whole journey of human life. So, if Shakespeare were giving you "the talk," would he have convinced you to do what he was asking?