Poetry - Sonnets

“Death Be Not Proud” by John Donne

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

1. In your own words, explain some of the reasons Donne gives for why Death should not be proud.
2. This poem is an *apostrophe* to Death. Explain what an apostrophe is, and explain why you think Donne would speak directly to Death.

“Sonnet CXXX” (“Sonnet 130”) by William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;   
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
   And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
   As any she belied with false compare.

1. Do you think Shakespeare is insulting his girlfriend in this poem? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that it is significant that Shakespeare is *not* saying these things directly *to* his girlfriend (e.g. – “*Your* eyes are nothing like the sun…”)? Why or why not?