



# A Desert Island Poem

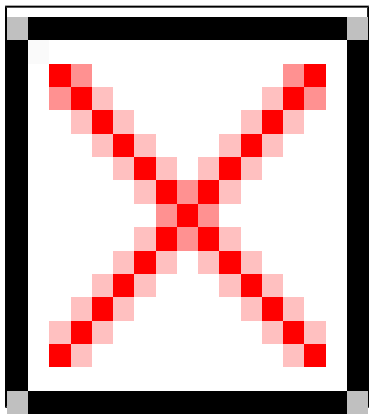
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The anthologist's must have: **Allie Esiri** chooses



Allie Esiri is the award-winning anthologist behind best-selling collections **A Poem for Every Day of the Year** and **A Poem for Every Night of the Year**. Out now in paperback is **A Poem for Every Autumn Day**, a gorgeous seasonal collection which graces the cover of this **Books for Keeps Poetry Special**.

But which poem would she say most deserves a place in anthologies? We asked her.

Of all poems, well it's an impossible task, but it would be hard not to include Shakespeare's most famous sonnet and the best-known love poem in the English language. The Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge described Shakespeare as 'myriad-minded' for his ability to hold several ideas in play at once. His fellow poet John Keats later described a similar ability of the dramatist to surrender any opinions of his own to his vision of the world as it is, even to the point of uncertainty and confusion, which he called 'negative capability'. Both of these virtues are present in spades throughout *Sonnet 18*, in which the speaker declares that the charm of a beautiful day in summer pales in comparison to the almost unimaginable magnificence of his beloved. Read it aloud. It's a wonder.

Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,

And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd:  
But thy eternal Summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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