

SHAKESPEAREAN TELESONNET PROGRAM

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WELCOME TO THE SHAKESPEAREAN TELESONNET PROGRAM. IF YOU WILL TYPE YOUR PHONE NUMBER AND A FRIEND'S, I WILL CREATE A NEW SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET. TRY IT.

WHAT IS YOUR PHONE NUMBER? 252-6294

WHAT IS YOUR FRIEND'S NUMBER? 608-0936

THOSE ARE TRICKY NUMBERS. HMM... LET ME SEE... WHAT SHALL I WRITE? AH, HERE IT IS!

SHAKESPEAREAN TELESONNET NO. 25262946080936

*By looking on thee in the living day,
O let me, true in love, but truly write,
That I might see what the old world could say
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight.
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air:
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
Such civil war is in my love and hate
And I by this will be a gainer too;
Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be,
If ten of thine ten times refigur'd thee.*

The Shakespearean Telesonnet Program takes up where the Bard of Avon left off. Using 70 of his lines, the program can generate any of 61,036,015,625 new sonnets. Writing the program was easy, but selecting the lines was a balancing act between rhyme and reason. Out of Shakespeare's original 2,156 lines, I picked 14 sets of 10 lines that rhymed; but when the new sonnets flashed down the screen, there were awkward grammatical jumps from line to line. I pared the sets down to 5 lines apiece, and that solved the problem.

Anyone who knows a little BASIC programming should be able to write their own version. Aside from the computer's "introduction" here's the heart of the program. When you type two 7-digit phone numbers after the two questions, the computer reads the numbers in order, one digit at a time. If a digit is between 0 and 4, it goes to the first set of lines. (If greater than 4, it subtracts 5 and uses the new digit instead.) When it finds the line identified by that digit, it lists the line on the screen. Then it loops back to the next digit in the phone number sequence and repeats the

process for the next set of lines, and so on to the last digit. Before you can say "honorificabilitudinitatibus," a telesonnet twinkles on the screen.

- 0,5 Against the stormy gusts of winter's day (13.11)
 1,6 To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way (34.03)
 2,7 By looking on thee in the living day (43.10)
 3,8 When I perhaps compounded am with clay (71.10)
 4,9 Then if he thrive and I be cast away (30.13)
- 0,5 O let me, true in love, but truly write (21.09)
 1,6 I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright (28.09)
 2,7 Thy edge should blunter be than appetite (56.02)
 3,8 Upon thy side against myself I'll fight (88.03)
 4,9 I have seen roses damask'd, red and white (130.05)
- 0,5 And fortify yourself in your decay (16.03)
 1,6 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay (23.07)
 2,7 That I might see what the old world could say (59.09)
 3,8 And life no longer than thy love will stay (92.03)
 4,9 For, thou betraying me, I do betray (151.05)
- 0,5 And see the brave day sunk in hideous night (12.02)
 1,6 And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight (30.08)
 2,7 Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight (36.08)
 3,8 And sweets grown common lose their dear delight (102.12)
 4,9 Which should transport me farthest from your sight (117.08)
- 0,5 You had a father: let your son say so (13.14)
 1,6 Toward thee I'll run, and give him leave to go (51.14)
 2,7 I grant I never saw a goddess go (130.11)
 3,8 What means the world to say it is not so (148.06)
 4,9 Love's eye is not so true as all men's: no (148.08)
- 0,5 Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair (6.13)
 1,6 Against this coming end you should prepare (13.03)
 2,7 In so profound abysm I throw all care (112.09)
 3,8 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare (130.13)
 4,9 Two loves I have of comfort and despair (144.01)
- 0,5 Receiving [naught] by elements so slow (44.13)
 1,6 If some suspect of ill mask'd not thy show (70.13)
 2,7 That you yourself, being extant, well might show (83.06)
 3,8 To give full growth to that which still doth grow (115.14)
 4,9 Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe (127.13)
- 0,5 When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear (13.08)
 1,6 As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air (21.12)
 2,7 Making his style admired everywhere (84.12)
 3,8 And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair (99.07)
 4,9 If Time have any wrinkle graven there (100.10)
- 0,5 When I have seen such interchange of state (64.09)
 1,6 If my dear love were but the child of state (124.01)
 2,7 O'er whom [thy] fingers walk with gentle gait (128.11)
 3,8 Past reasons hated, as a swallow'd bait (129.07)
 4,9 With others thou shouldst not abhor my state (150.12)

- 0,5 Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you (57.06)
 1,6 Without all ornament, itself and true (68.10)
 2,7 O, know, sweet love, I always write of you (76.09)
 3,8 Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you (86.02)
 4,9 Incapable of more, replete with you (113.13)
- 0,5 Such civil war is in my love and hate (35.12)
 1,6 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare (64.11)
 2,7 For thee against myself I'll vow debate (89.13)
 3,8 Thus policy in love, t'anticipate (118.09)
 4,9 Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate (142.01)
- 0,5 And you in Grecian tires are painted new (53.08)
 1,6 Robbing no old to dress his beauty new (68.12)
 2,7 Which should example where your equal grew (84.04)
 3,8 Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew (86.04)
 4,9 And I by this will be a gainer too (88.09)
- 0,5 So thou through windows of thine age shall see (3.11)
 1,6 Let this sad int'rim like the oceans be (56.09)
 2,7 Let not my love be call'd idolatry (105.01)
 3,8 Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be (126.11)
 4,9 He is contented thy poor drudge to be (151.11)
- 0,5 And, being frank, she lends to those are free (4.04)
 1,6 If ten of thine ten times refigur'd thee (6.10)
 2,7 Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me (22.07)
 3,8 Without accusing you of injury (58.08)
 4,9 Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee (142.10)

Without the program, you can still figure out any telesonnet by going from set to set and picking one of the two digits on the left side that corresponds to each digit in the 2 phone numbers. For reference, each number on the right denotes the source sonnet and the line number. The lines were mined from the New Cambridge Shakespeare (Houghton Mifflin, 1942).