Sonnet Explication

This assignment has two parts:

Part 1.

A line-by-line paraphrase of the poem. So you will copy the poem and then underneath each line, there will be your paraphrase of the preceding line.

For example:

**Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?**

Should I compare you to the mildest and sunniest days on the English calendar?

Part 2:

You’ll write an essay that looks at the following questions.

1. what does it say? (what do the words, phrases, sentences mean?)
2. what does it do? (try to put it into what you know of the traditions that he was embracing or abandoning; articulate the ways it functions in establishing character or tone, setting up an action, invoking other works and events, evoking political/philosophical resonances, etc.)
3. how does it work at the level of language? (structurally, poetics, word choice, metrics, etc.)
4. how does your close look at this sonnet deepen your appreciation and understanding of this poet's work?

Your actual 3-4 page essay begins with part 2), as you briefly indicate what the passage does--how it works with respect to imagery, "plot," theme, characterization, poetic convention, and/or dramatic effect, as appropriate)--and discuss how it works at the level of language. Quickly walk your reader through the passage, commenting and highlighting as you go, and delve more deeply where indicated. Do use the Dictionary, smoothly integrating linguistic insights into your analysis. Do work hard to untangle inverted syntax and unexpected idioms. What insights does your analysis furnish into the themes, images, and patterns the poet is pursuing?

Does it tell us something particularly significant about a character or event or interaction--or about the sonneteer himself, or his relation to sonneteering? If you like, you may deftly make connections to other literary works you have read, to other resonances it sets up, but you must maintain your focus on the poem itself, and you should avoid the critical or analytical sources. Let me repeat: DO NOT use others' interpretations—

Above all, your essay must promote a clear thesis, exhibit good organization, and feature solid development--it has to hang together as a coherent and well-written essay, with concrete evidence and precise word choice. Proofread for strong constructions (see Resources).