

SONNET 18 by William Shakespeare

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:  
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines  
And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;  
And every fair from fair sometimes declines.  
By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm’d:  
But thy eternal Summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his shade.  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:  
    So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see.  
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

How do linguists know the way people pronounced words long ago when there were no recordings?

One thing they did was to look at poetry to see what words were supposed to rhyme. Look at these two lines:

I sat, staring at the machine  
And wondered how it could be so clean.

*Machine* and *clean* had to have the same sound even though they were spelled differently. (Poetry always used to rhyme.)

When they looked at enough rhymed words, they began to see a pattern.