

Dealing with death

[Life](#), [Death](#)



Dealing with death: the effect of love on death Death, an event that cannot be avoided is often paired with tragedy. Poem at Thirty-Nine by Alice Walker shows a daughter grieving for her dead father, Mother in a refugee camp tells the story of a mother's care for her dying son, and Rosetti looks at a dying woman wanting her lover to forget her and move on in Remember. Death has been taken on by many poets from Thomas Hardy to Seamus Heaney, and whilst they explore death's effect from different viewpoints, they all agree on the sorrow that it can bring. Remember by Rosetti, a sonnet may seem to talk about love, but it is actually about forgetting love, due to death. The speaker knows death is near, so tells her partner to forget her, rather than "remember and be sad". It deals with themes of death love and acceptance and using a gentle and loving tone, creating sympathy and pathos. A consequence of loving recklessly, Hardy's Plena Timoris connects death with love and relationships showing how difficult love is for woman, causing death as she "Drowned herself for love of a man". Both poems are set in the Victorian era, the former giving a positive view of love whilst the latter gives a pessimistic view of love. Also describing love between two people, Poem at thirty nine by Walker, describes parental love in a situation of poverty, only to be ended by the death of the poet's father. The poet grieves, yet celebrates while writing in an autobiographical nature, making the poem more personal, thus letting us view into her nostalgic memories. "He taught me how" shows that she is grateful for her father's life lessons. This is also reflected in Funeral Blues by W. H. Auden, a poem about devastating grief, where the speaker cannot forget the partner. Both poets want to remember the dead, but for Walker, life goes on, while with Auden, it

cannot. Set in a refugee camp, the poem shows the love between the mother and child, an undesirable lifestyle of starvation, disease and helplessness as a refugee in the times of civil war. As the mother cares for her young child that is soon to die, it gives out a sense of loss. Mother in a refugee camp shows the bond between them, even when all hope is gone. It creates great empathy and concern through the mother's actions. Exploring the effects of an unexpected and tragic death, Heaney's Mid-term break recalls the poet's reaction to the death of his young brother. Only a child himself at the time, the poem details Heaney's struggle to make sense of the unexpected loss. Although looking at death from different perspectives, both poets create despair and grief at death of young children. In Achebe's Mother in a Refugee camp, the relationship between the mother and her dying son is one of utmost tenderness, comparing it with "Madonna and her child", suggesting the maternal love between the mother and child in a refugee camp overthrows the one between the Virgin Mary and Jesus. In the refugee camp, the mother "held a ghost smile", showing her faint and barely existing shadow of hope that her young son will survive, a metaphor for what she once had. She cares for her son and "did it like putting flowers on a tiny grave", a simile for the loss that she will endure, foreshadowing future loss and sadness at the impending death of her son. In Heaney's Mid-term Break Heaney describes his brother's coffin as a "four foot box". The alliteration shows sorrow as the softness of the "f" connotes the idea of pity and helplessness while the metaphor makes it seem small but contained, creating a sense of disbelief that someone so small is dead. It also creates sympathy and pity from the somber tone that the long vowel sound causes.

Death does not only affect a single person, it affects the entire family. Heaney notes how his father who takes 'funerals in his stride' has broken down and is crying. The image creates a more emotional atmosphere, as tragedy mixes with shock of seeing his father cry, a change from strong and controlled to uncontrollable. These poems both contrast and link as they broach the topic of things that will not last, such as the diminishing soul of her son in *Mother in a Refugee camp*. Looking at death while love goes on, *Remember* by Christina Rossetti, nothing can last forever, as she is addressing her lover, hoping that he will forget her and move on. "When you can no more hold me by the hand" represents that she is sad to let her lover go, knowing that their love cannot last. It creates a soft and loving atmosphere, showing us the essence of her relationship. Following on, the words "silent land;" is a metaphor for heaven and peace, as she knows that she will die soon. Underpinned by pathos, pity and sadness, the semi colon causes a reflective pause in the poem. Strong diction is used by the word "vestige", meaning something that has been left behind, (poets love for her partner). The last two lines of the sonnet is a paradox of the title, as she insists that her lover forget her and move on, instead of remembering her and deal with her death for the rest of his life. The poet is a very religious Anglican, which reflects through "if the darkness and corruption leave" in which she is imagining heaven as a place opposite from earth, connecting with the idea of love in the time of death. In *Plena Timoris*, the line "Until he grew tired." with a caesura representing the sudden end to the relationship and isolating the phrase, thus showing a cynical view of love. "So much for love in this mortal sphere!" shapes an idea of love that isn't in this world,

but in a religious way instead, as the word “ mortal” suggests mankind while its opposite would be heaven. In the last stanza, “ the girl’s heart shuddered” as if she suddenly realises what could happen to her if she lets her heart roam free. “ How I miss my father” in Poem at Thirty-Nine shows the sadness, grief and euphemism that the writer feels, repeated to emphasize its meaning in line 27 with an exclamation mark. The poem shows a young girl growing to be independent and strong, remembering the way her father acted around her using the simile “ he cooked like a person dancing in a yoga meditation” showing the “ fun side” of him. The tone of the poem changes from grief to celebration that everything her father gave her is not teaching her valuable life lessons, such as the value of money and of truth, she dwells upon them while she seasons her life. Use of tripling (listing) “ cooking, writing, chopping” connotes the simple and pleasurable routines of her life. Only full sentences are used in lines of the poem, emphasizing the fact that she grieves for her father. A sense of respectful maturity is created by “ staring into the fire”, as she basks in the warmth of memories and reminisces on the sadness of losing her father. Funeral Blues portrays the image of a ‘ dead’ life as his life previously revolved around the partner. This is shown by “ He was my North, South, my East and West” connoting that his partner was his compass, his guide to all things in life. Funeral Blues does not have a specific layout showing that it is everything the poet is feeling, an overrun of emotion. He creates a sense of desolation, as he wants to “ pack up the moon and dismantle the sun” killing all existence, as nothing has any importance anymore. These 6 poems all talk about love and death’s effects on certain people in different forms, bringing out their emotions on death.

Tenderness that cannot be rivaled brings tears to reader's eyes in Mother in a refugee camp, while Mid-term break interacts with readers to create sympathy. Poem at Thirty-Nine expresses Walker's personal experiences, while Funeral Blues causes pity at the speaker's sorrow. Remember connotes the idea of forgetting, contrasting with Plena Timoris, although both construct a feeling of insecurity about love. All these poems have love and death as their linking theme, although they look at both from different points of view, they pick out aspects of suffering because of one or the other. Reflecting upon these poems, they give out a sense of darkness with a glimmer of hope in between, causing readers to feel a dark ominous yet emotional atmosphere due to the taint of love communicates the fragility of love and the aftershocks of death. Word count: 1459 Candidate number: 6127 Hoi Laam Leung