

# Shakespeare's sonnet 102

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Shakespeare's Sonnet 102 Poet and screenwriter, Susan Griffin, once said, "A story is told as much by silence as by speech." This statement underlines the fact that just because words are not spoken, it does not mean that there is no meaning behind the silence. Someone's lack of words can have as much, if not even more, power as another's most persuasive speech. In Sonnet 102, Shakespeare explains why he believes in the power of silence regarding his feelings towards his true love.

His allusion to the nightingale correlates perfectly with the paradox of his increasing love for a woman in conveying the sonnet's overall theme that silence is always preferable to just meaningless words. In the sonnet, Shakespeare uses the allusion of the nightingale to describe his love of a young woman. He states, "Our love was new.../ when I was wont to greet it.../ as Philomel in summer's froth doth sing" (lines 5-7), comparing the speaker's love as his relationship with the woman progresses to that of nightingale's song.

In classical times, the nightingale was widely referred to as Philomel. In Roman and Greek mythology, Philomela was a woman turned into a nightingale by the Gods to save her from the hands of rapist. Because of the violence associated with the myth, the nightingale's song is often interpreted as a lament, but it is also construed to symbolize beauty and even, such as in the case of this poem, love. In a factual sense, a nightingale is a small bird that frequently sings at night as well as in the day, standing out as one of the only birds that sing after the sun descends.

By comparing his love to Philomel after she "stops her pipe in growth of riper days" (8), he makes his theme of silence clear. Even the most vocal of

birds such as the nightingale knows when to stop singing its beautiful song, showing the world how much he truly loves it by offering a moment of peace and quiet. This resembles the feelings of the narrator because even though he loves her with all his heart, he does not want to bore her by saying it too often or by making it appear as if his love is not as special as it used to be.

In addition, Shakespeare also introduces the poem with the paradox " My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming;" (1) that connects his allusion to true love. This paradox starts the poem off by explaining how his love for a woman has actually gotten stronger over time although he may not verbalize it as much as he used to. He attempts to explain that even though he keeps it more to himself now, his love for his woman has only increased as time passed. His love resembles the nightingale's singing in that it is always going to be there even if it is not heard because he does not want to ruin the beauty of it by saying it too much.

The initial burst of first love has surpassed the narrator now, leaving him with a genuine love that does not need a constant reminding with words in order to convey the passion in his heart. Although observing a nightingale singing is rare, its music can always be heard. This parallels the speaker's love in that his woman does not need to constantly be told how much he loves her, but rather she should know it by his eyes and his actions. His silence emphasizes the idea that words are not always necessary to express one's feelings, and even in some cases it is better to keep quiet.

Shakespeare's allusion to the nightingale and paradox of his growing love work together to convey the universal idea that sometimes a lack of words can have a greater depiction of a person's inner feelings than the best

articulated vocalizations possible. If a man really loves a woman, she should be able to comprehend the intensity of that love not by the things he says, but by the way he acts and how he looks at her. Perhaps all the noise and speaking in the world then is actually people's lack of true love for one another, a love that can only be found in knowing and understanding the Lord Jesus Christ.