

Analysis of first love by john clare

[Life](#), [Love](#)



First love is a poem, which encapsulates the experience the poet has falling in love for the first time. It is rejoicing the love he attained for a woman named Mary Joyce however there is sadness and a feeling of dissatisfaction hovering in the background. This feeling exists, as the love was unrequited. The poem has an underlying tone of innocence and flurry of emotions as it is the poet's very first attempt at love exhibiting his feelings for Mary. The opening of the first stanza only shows how sudden and unexpected the feeling was as he was never 'struck before that hour'.

This is followed by sibilance alliteration 'so sudden and so sweet' further emphasizing on the shock and bewilderment of the overwhelming feeling confirming it is a new experience. He uses his 'heart' as a symbol that she has 'stolen' completely 'away' however unknowingly. The paragraph continues to describe how he physically felt ill as his 'face turned pale a deadly pale'. Generally when a person falls in love the first instinct is that the 'blood [is] rushed' to the face, which occurs as a latter reaction.

This could be because he probably already sensed that the love could not be returned as he didn't say anything to her instead he hoped that his eyes would convey the message 'words from my eyes did start'. He never came close to even touching or talking to her however the line 'all seemed to turn to clay' conveys the strong affection he attained for her. He also shows how the woman is in control of their (hallucinated) relationship as she could mould and re-mould him as per her wish. In the second stanza he goes on to describe more of his emotions brought forward by this interaction.

He makes it quite visual for us of how the love has its affect on him and how he flushes with embarrassment so much that for a moment he feels blind. The physical impact of love relates the experience of love and loss. His life, his emotions were all now just focused on this one girl so much so that it 'seemed midnight [to him] at noonday. This stanza ends on a very sad but dramatic note when he says that ' blood burnt around my heart' because he was in terrible pain emotionally as well as physically.

The pace of the poem is however slows down in the last stanza. The poet seems depressed that the love he encompasses for Mary will never be fulfilled. The stanza begins with the poet asking rhetorical questions. In the first question he refers to flowers again like in the first stanza when he says ' her face bloomed like a sweet flower' it shows how innocent the love is and as they were never in physical contact even virginity. Also Clare admits that him and Mary could never be together as shown forth by the comparison of ' flower' and ' winter'.

According to him it will be as hard for their relationship to bloom as it would be for a flower in winter and slowly it will wilt and die. The second question shows his desperate depression. It clearly implies love as cold, deceitful and to be treated with caution. But he himself dove into it and continually obsesses about her. Love has a very strong physical impact within his body. These new feeling seem to have shaken him with surprise. The line ' my heart has left its dwelling place' exhibits the sense of loneliness and desertion that he feels.

It includes rhetorical questions such as “are flowers the winter’s choice?” and “is love; a bed always snow?” The reference to flowers takes us back to the simile in the beginning of the poem where the blooming of her face is compared to that of a flower suggestive of the blossoming of his love for her. It is in sharp contrast to the second reference of the flower which can only wilt and die in winter rather than blossom suggesting the lack of any possibility of the two coming together.

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He refers to her face blooming like a sweet flower signifying the blossoming of his love which contrasts with the second reference to the flowers which is compared to winter suggests the lack of any possibility of them coming together just as the flower. The second question shows his desperate depression implying that love is cold, deceitful and to be treated with caution. Having drowned him in her life now it seems impossible for him to come out of it as ‘my heart has left its dwelling place there is a sense of loneliness and the desertion that lurks towards the end of the poem making the reader to almost empathize with the poet.

We are made to go through the experience and as the poem uses a diary form, it almost appears as if the poet is pouring his heart onto the paper. This is what makes the poem stand out as one can really suffer with him. He uses similes ‘her face bloomed like a sweet flower’, metaphors ‘my life has turned into clay’, alliterations such as ‘so sudden so sweet’ and realistic and effective images to make that possible. The rhyming structure of the poem is AB-AB-CD-CD.

In each paragraph his feelings keep developing and we are made to witness this experience. The realistic images the poem has, helps the reader to understand the physical effects of being in love. The love he has was the sweetest, noblest and deepest love he has witnessed in his entire life so much so that it later drove him to insanity. Therefore more than first love I would consider it to be his true love. I feel as if the poet has been successful in conveying the impact of his emotions throughout this poem.