

'how do i love thee'
by elizabeth barret
browning and 'to his
coy mistress' by
and...



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Latin used different words for different types of love, for example when talking about sex, and love between a partner, the word they used was eros. They also have words for friendship, love of a family member and even a word for love of pleasure. However English only has one word for all types of affection, this word being 'love'. This simple fact already displays how our one word, love, has many facets. Love has always been a favourite topic for poets, regardless of their age, sex and the period they wrote it in.

This is because there are many facets of love and there are many ways of expressing different types of love through poetry. 'There are many facets of love'; this can be proven by focusing on pre 1914 poetry. 'How do I love Thee' by Elizabeth Barret Browning and 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvel are two well contrasting poems that easily prove this fact. E. B. Browning was born in 1806.

She married a poet known as Robert Browning, against her father's approval. She married at a secret wedding and fled to Italy. Here she lived out the rest of her life, dying at the age of fifty-five. Marvel was born in 1621, the son of a vicar. He spent five years travelling and touring Holland, France, Italy and Spain.

He was employed as the assistant Latin secretary to the council of state in 1657; four years after being recommended by his good friend John Milton. He died in the year 1633. 'How Do I Love Thee' and 'To His Coy Mistress' are two very contrasting poems. Both were written to express love and passion for a beloved, but this may be the only similarity that they share. 'How Do I

'Love Thee' is a poem that explores the eternal, undying love that Browning holds for her husband, Robert.

..” I love thee purely, as they turn from praise”...

This quote shows that Browning's love is pure and sincere. Browning strengthens how honest her emotions are by constantly using religious imagery throughout the sonnet. Words and phrases written such as “Praise”, “ ideal Grace” and “ if God choose” are sometimes written using irregular capital letters to not only stress their importance, but to also help portray a theme of righteousness and purity in the poem by incorporating religion and faith, again stressing Browning's sincerity. Her father was a vicar; this is probably the reason why the poem contains so much religious imagery throughout. Phrases and words such as “ saint” and “ if god chose” again express the purity and sincerity of her love.

These ideas of ' pure love' from “ How Do I Love Thee” could be compared to the poem ' Shall I compare thee' as both are answering questions; and both are expressing a true, selfless love, a love that does not revolve around lust unlike Marvell's poem.'How do I love thee' was published in 1850, the sonnet's choice of words and language style express and emphasize the love that the poet has for her partner. Browning, being the speaker of the poem, begins asking the question of her lover “ How do I love thee?” and answers by saying “ Let me count the ways”.'She then goes into depth stating how she loves her beloved how her soul can reach to the “ depth and breadth and height”; here she is expressing how her soul has no limits to which it can love, she is painting a picture of the never-ending vastness of her love. The

adjectives state all the dimensions possible that she is able to love; again emphasizing her limitless love is not built around the physical aspects of her beloved.

The main theme of the poem is the fact that Browning loves with all her life..." I love thee with the breath, Smiles, tears, of all my life" Here she describes her true love as every human emotion. The word ' breath' expresses that she loves with her whole life, the word ' Smiles' expresses she will love her beloved through the good times, and ' tears' expresses how Browning's love is strong enough for her to stand by him in times of sorrow. Showing the different forms of love she holds for her beloved helps strengthen the fact that there are many facets of love.

Browning then continues by saying," I shall but love thee better after death" Here the poet powerfully states how her already limitless love will grow even after death. This impressive statement, written using religious imagery, shows how the poet believes in an afterlife or heaven, but more importantly it shows how she will love him more in heaven as they both are closer to God, and that they will have an eternity to love one another. This line would help express and justify her undying love that will never stop growing. However this passionate love when contrasted to that of the poem, ' To His Coy Mistress', is very different. This already outlines how there are many facets of love. ' To his Coy Mistress' writes of a love that a man has towards his mistress, a love or desire that appears to be quite shallow and one sided," An hundred years should grow to praise.

.. Two hundred to adore each breast...

" Lines like this show how the speaker, Marvell, is focused on one thing and one thing only, a lust for sex. Marvell writes that if he had the time, he would adore her, and praise her for a hundred years, as if his beloved were a God or Queen as the word ' praise' suggests. By using the image of time, Marvell is trying to explain to his beloved that his love for her is undying, and that he would adore her for hundreds of years if he could. This sounds very noble but we then realise this supposed ' noble' expression is nothing more than pure flattery." "How Do I Love Thee" contrasts this love expressed in " To his Coy Mistress", as Browning expresses a love not based around lust and passion alone, Browning writes of a love that takes many forms," I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise" This quote shows Browning's love is good and pure.

It expresses what facet of love she is trying to put across. Browning implies that her emotions are similar to the feeling of love a person has after they ' turn from praise' in other words, when they have left church. This shows her love has only good intentions. However Marvell has expressed a love that is not like that of Browning's, hers being a love that would grow even after death, this love is one of passion that a man has towards his mistress.

In the poem Marvell is using imagery to write an argument in which the speaker is trying to win over a reluctant lady-his mistress. He starts by saying," HAD we but world enough, and time,'HAD' has been written in irregular capital letters to emphasize that they don't have the time he is talking about, therefore he has no time to court her. This shows he is trying to rush her into a relationship so that he can achieve his only goal, getting her into bed..."

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.. This coyness, lady, were no crime," Again, this contrasts the love that Browning has. The word ' crime' outlines how the poet views his mistress' shyness and hesitancy as annoying, again proving that he only has a lust for sex, and that his supposed ' true love' that would grow in time is insincere, he is now coming across as impatient. This quote shows how the poet is impatient and how his love is not that of loyalty and timeless devotion like Browning's, but that of urgency. He wants to win her love over while she is still young for mere sexual gain as he doesn't want her to get old before they have sex.

These two poems contrast each other well, yet there are other pre-1914 poems that would vary on these ideas of love, and therefore show that there are many facets of love. In the poem Marvell wrote, the speaker in this poem uses biblical and natural imagery such as " by the Indian Ganges" or " love you ten years before the Flood" to enhance his argument. By incorporating natural wonders he is trying to inspire and flatter her. And by using religious imagery and speaking of a time long ago, he is expressing how deep his emotions are. He then changes the tone of the poem.

The once exotic and luxurious tone has changed into lifelessness one; it then progresses into a fiery passion at the end. However the most important fact about this poem is that Marvell's love is insincere, the poet even suggests this himself..." Times winged chariot hurrying near".

.. The poet's use of a mythical winged chariot that supposedly flew over earth could be interpreted that he is trying to hint o the reader the fact that

his love is nothing more than a mere myth. The poet clearly is willing to say anything to court and convince his mistress into a sexual relationship.

“ Now therefore, while the youthful hueSits on thy skin like morning dew,” This simile reveals his desperation and his rising passion, it shows how he's feeling so desperate that he's willing to compare her youth and beauty to nature and use blatant flattery to woo her. In a poem such as ' Since There's No Help', it could be interpreted that Drayton is writing about how his love for someone has ended. Love usually suggests a person having intentions to have a relationship for companionship and sex, however in Drayton, the poet writes about his love life, and how his relationship is coming to an end. Even though there was love, he writes how this has turned into hate.

He now wants to leave, he writes how he's happy that he's leaving the love he once had in order to set himself free, Another poem express how love has been done to death in poetry “ Love and Poetry” by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. Here Margaret has written a poem that is a cliché of love. She starts off using personification...

“ O love, how thou art tired out with rhyme!” Here she expresses how love has been written about in so many poems that the word has lost all meaning, its ' tired with rhyme'. This cliché is not writing about love as an emotion. Through personification Margaret has written that love is like a piece of fruit that all poets take, not only is this an interesting simile, the language also uses personification, as if love were fruit on a tree, as if it was living or tangible. By writing about love as a tangible object, it adds yet another facet to love. If we compare the two poems by looking at their rhyming pattern

and their rhythm, we see the Italian sonnet (a highly patterned poem) written by Browning is describing the ever-lasting love she has towards her partner.

She uses a rhyming pattern of 4-4-6, whilst repeating the phrase " I Love thee..." for emphasis, she also expands on this emphasis by using frequent irregular capital letters to again emphasizing her love.

The other poem, ' To his Coy Mistress' is written in rhyming couplets. The poet uses this for more than one reason, firstly it helps the poem by giving it a certain rhythm; and it also adds humour to the poem..." My vegetable love should grow, Vaster than empires, and more slow" By looking at this phallic quote we can see that this language not only adds to the predominantly humorous tone, yet it also displays the poet's potential love towards his mistress; he stresses how much love he could hold for her in time.

(He then strengthens this love by use of alliteration, which he uses throughout the poem. Marvell used the ' L' sound quite often, ' let, ' level' and ' life', all these words contribute to the loving feel of the sonnet.)In conclusion I believe that there are many facets of love. I have shown how poets may speak about true love, and how some use the word ' love' as a euphemism (I believe Marvell used this word, as it sounds much more acceptable than sex.

I think he did this, as the word ' sex' seems to be quite explicit due to the fact that these poems were written in the Victorian era.) In ' To his Coy Mistress', the speaker expresses a love that appears to be centered around passion and sex. There are also poets that show other facets of the idea of <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-i-love-thee-by-elizabeth-barret-browning-and-to-his-coy-mistress-by-andrew-marvell/>

love by writing about the pain of being in love and separating after it ends.

All these poems show that the word love can be used to express a range of different human emotions. And as the word describes a range of human emotions, the best way to see that there are numerous facets to the ideas of love is to read where these passionate emotions are best-expressed, poetry.