

What we talk about when we talk about love

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



Justin Goings Debra Dockter English Composition October 12th 2012 “ The definition of love may be unique to the individual, if it can be defined at all” The feeling you have when you first look upon your new born child, the radiant warmth in your face when you say “ I do” at the altar, or the divine feeling in your chest when you pray. Every one of these situations could be used to describe love. Its an emotion so richly embedded into our minds, that every single one of us can say they’ve experienced it in their lives. Some might even say they’ve molded their existence around it.

However, while we are all familiar with love, the situations in which we encounter it are so diverse that the definition has become unique to the individual person. “ What We Talk about When We Talk about Love” does an amazing job of forcing the reader to wonder what this feeling really means to them. What starts out as a normal conversation between four friends almost turns into a harsh debate on the elusive nature of love. Of the four people in the story the person that appears to struggle with the topic the most is Mel. The author seems to use a bit of symbolism in his story by making Mel a cardiologist.

Almost as if saying because he is a heart doctor, he would have plenty to say about matters of the heart. Mel’s original position is that real love is nothing less than spiritual love, but he quickly becomes unsatisfied with his original answer. Seeing the affection between Nick and Laura makes him analyze the question even further. He eventually goes into a story about an elderly couple that was gravely injured in a car accident and it looks like he is going to have a strong point, yet somehow he can’t exactly describe what it is.

Despite Mel's knowledge though, he still struggles to find a clear answer. My favorite example in the story is when Mel is trying to explain sentimental love. He explains that he and Terri say that they love each other, yet they would both say that they have loved other people before them. That the "saving grace" is when one of them dies, the other might grieve for a while, but will eventually love again. All of their love would just be a memory, if it was even that. This helps to illustrate that love is such an important part of people's lives because that we are able to move on and love again after tying such important emotional feelings with someone. But in relation to the story it leaves you feeling as if love has no meaning. Regardless of it being the saving grace he says it is, the thought seems to disturb Mel because at this point on he displays obvious aggression towards his wife. Nick, the narrator of the story, doesn't seem to have too many vocal opinions on what love actually means to him, but it's his observations or actions that really seem to give away his stance. For example throughout the story he is constantly making gestures to his wife.

Such as resting his hand on his her thigh, or kissing her hand. He is always showing his affection, leading you to believe that love for him and Laura is strictly sentimental. It's the only points in the story where I feel love was actually expressed and felt. It almost seems like the author is trying to say that even though they may never reach an agreement on what love is, actions are the only thing that matters in the end. The only character that touches on the fact that love is different from person to person is Mel's wife, Terri.

She explains that her ex-husband loved her so much that he tried to kill her. Everyone else seems mortified by her story and they try their best to convince her that abuse is not love. However her opinion is important in explaining the diversity of the emotion, because even though her ex husband expressed it in a very unhealthy manner, all the characteristics of love were there. Even though no one else shares her feelings with the example, she's the only one with a solid idea of what it means.

Nick and Laura only show what they feel about love by touching each other gently, or by saying " I love you". And Will talks like he has a lot of ideas on what the definition is, but by the end of the story you realize he's just as confused as everyone else. Terri is the only person that can actually express a view of love from personal experience. The sun setting in the story, in combination with the drinking seems to bring a loss of clarity on the subject as the friends continue to talk.

Nick notes in the beginning that " sunlight filled the kitchen from the big window behind the sink" and the general mood of the party seems to be pretty happy. However as the conversation becomes a bit more complex and dark, Nick notes that the light in the kitchen is fading. The guests even seem to become more content to letting Will rant on. By the end of the story it is nighttime and no one is left talking. You're left with an almost hopeless feeling and begin to wonder if any of them actually really love each other. What We Talk about When We Talk about Love" was a story that I actually enjoyed reading a few times to try and understand. I believe that it illustrates the true diversity of the emotion and is a story to really make you think. Even though by the end you feel like love is almost hopeless, it is after a bit

of reflection that you begin to realize the complexity of the word. It might not have an exact definition, and maybe it's because of the inadequacy of the human language, but everyone will have a special example of what love really means to them.