

Love poem critical analysis

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“ Love Poem,” written by John Frederick illustrates true love in a realistic way. He expresses to the reader that there is more to love than what is usually written about in poems. To get this theme across, he plays with the reader’s expectations about what he is going to read. The title gives the reader the assumption that this poem is about a beautiful sonnet to an unattainable love. The reader envisions the same lofty depiction of a beloved woman he has heard in numerous traditional poems. In the first stanza, the reader realizes this expectation will not be fulfilled.

As the poem continues, the reader’s expectations come to an end in a more rich and true form. He eventually finds a much more complex illustration of love than he had expected. The poem begins with the phrase “ my clumsiest dear” (1), which at this point seems to be a obvious backhanded compliment. It reads as a strange combination of admiration and criticism. The phrase suggests that the speaker is talking to a loved one but not a perfect person. The speaker continues his assault on his lover's dexterity with the use of many symbolic images.

The reader gets a picture of the lover as having a lethal touch, which causes all glasses to “ chip and ring” (2). The stanza goes on to describe her as a “ bull in china” (3) and a “ bur in linen” (3). These are images that involve recklessness and destruction, not concepts that are typically associated with high praise for a loved one. Because of the images presented at this point, the reader is finding the poem to be something much different from what he had anticipated based on the title, heaping criticism rather than praise on the speaker's lover.

In the second stanza, the speaker brings the reader back toward his original sense of how the poem would play out. Suddenly the speaker is now praising the positive qualities he sees in his lover. He emphasizes his affection for her interpersonal skills: " The refugee uncertain at the door / You make at home... " (6-7). The speaker loves this woman for her ability to relate to those who are less fortunate. The way she helps in the lives of drunks and refugees is at the heart of her appeal to him.

Also read: In Exile Poem by Arthur Nortje

The reader's initial sense of the poem's contents now comes back into focus. It is indeed a poem about a loved one who is greatly admired. By the end of the poem, the message to the reader is clear. The speaker accepts his lover for her positives as well as her faults. The reader's expectations for the poem have been fulfilled, only in an unexpected way. The speaker's idea of love is much more complex than the traditional concept. The reader is able to better relate to this realistic depiction of love than he would have been if the poem had blandly followed its title.