

# "to his coy mistress" - poem explication essay

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## **To His Coy Mistress – Poem Explication**

In the Andrew Marvell poem “ To His Coy Mistress,” the speaker is attempting to woo a woman who does not return his advances. His ultimate argument, told over three stanzas, is that life is short and they must make the most of it.

The first stanza focuses on the man’s desire to explore every aspect of their love throughout all time, if they had it. The opening phrase “ had we but world enough and time” is the most well known of this poem, and has entered the cultural lexicon as an expression of the lament that that we do not have forever to do the things that we want.

The second stanza then emphasizes how short life really is – with “ time’s winged chariot hurrying near,” the woman’s beauty would fade, and all of her work to maintain her virginity would be for naught. The finite nature of life and time, therefore, makes it all the more imperative that they seize what time they have.

The third stanza then connects the two ideas in the previous stanzas – that the speaker is romantically interested in the subject, and that there is no time to waste. While they still have time (“ while the youthful hue / sits on thy skin like morning dew”), she should succumb to his charms, as she does not have time to remain virginal and coy.

The entire theme of the poem is that life is far too short to withhold yourself from the pleasures and joys of life. Much like the woman should loosen up and be with the man who adores her, the reader must remember the phrase

carpe diem and not let things like shyness and prudishness prevent us from getting what we want out of life – we will not get another chance to do so.