

Comparing and contrasting love poetry essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

My initial reaction to what I thought the love poetry was that it was going to be comic (like last year) and obviously romantic and perhaps even a bit 'soppy'. Also, because we knew it was going to be pre 1900 love poetry, I also expected some hard language and a lot of formality and 'old' words like 'thy', 'thou' or 'thee'.

Each poem in our selection has its own unique structure. Some are written in several stanzas, some in sonnet form and others simply in one stanza. Each poem also has its own rhyme and rhythm pattern.

The sonnets may be written in one stanza but it is quite easy to make out where the argumentative 'split' actually comes in. For example in 'Sonnet 18', at the end of each suggested break there is a colon and therefore we can see that the poem is split in a pattern 4, 4, 4, 2. 'Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part' is also written in the same pattern. Each section has its own subject: 1st -> Go away; 2nd -> Everything's done and dusted; 3rd -> He's thinking over it; 4th -> Reconciliation. But when put together it creates a much stronger argument because it makes it 'snappier' and yet smooth because it has a flow - one thing after another.

In 'The Despairing Lover' the line length is very irregular but each stanza portrays a different scene. In the first stanza we see the lover's initial reaction and then in the second stanza he decides against his decision; finally the last two lines round off the poem like a conclusion as in a sonnet or Shakespearean play.

Like the structure, the poems each have their own distinctive tones.

Drayton's sonnet has a very strong tone because of the use of imperatives and harsh words like 'shake', 'cancel' or 'Nay...you get no more of me'. But the change in tone comes when Drayton brings us back to the present, 'Now...', from the future proposals like 'when we meet...again'. Phrases such as 'the last gasp', 'Passion speechless' and 'Innocence is closing' makes the tone so much softer and the 's' and 'ssh' sounds give it a much more soft touch.

On the other hand, we have 'The Despairing Lover' where the tone is funny and mocking. The rhythm and rhyme create this very laid-back effect and the poet himself seems to be laughing at how over-dramatic people become in love.

Then we have the typical love poem 'She Walks In Beauty' by Byron. The tone is extremely affectionate and soft. Once again the use of soft sounds comes in, in the use of sibilance and alliteration: 'cloudless climes' and 'starry skies'.

In 'To His Coy Mistress' the tone rapidly changes. It goes from exasperation to threatening to sarcasm to excitement. But Marvell carries his cheekiness the whole way through. We can compare Michael Drayton's silent threat, when he is suggesting that if she leaves him he will die but he can still live if she gives him what he wants, to what Marvell wants from his love. They are both asking for the same thing but Drayton slips it into his poem whereas Marvell comes straight out with it.

Now even though the poems were written in different time periods, lovers – in this case the poets – still complimented their loves on the same things; naughty or nice. Shakespeare compared his love ‘to a summer’s day’ which can be considered the best and most beautiful time of year. Burns compared his love to ‘a red, red rose that’s newly sprung in June’. The connotations ‘red’ and ‘rose’ are still used widely in today’s modern times to describe our loved ones.

We think Byron is describing his cousin in ‘She Walks In Beauty’. We know he met her at a party and she was wearing black mourning clothes ‘like the night’. He praised her purity that was like ‘cloudless climes’ and her eyes like ‘starry skies’. This is similar to the way Romeo talked about Juliet in the banquet scene and Byron has created the classic love poem just like the way he was the classic lover – since so many male characters have been based on him such as Mr. Rochester from ‘Jane Eyre’ or . Andrew Marvell compliments his lover’s eyes. He compliments her sexy body parts, giving them ‘two hundred’ years but only ‘thirty to the rest’.

But compliments cannot last forever..... who says people do not complain in love? Pre 1900 poets certainly did. In ‘To His Coy Mistress’, Marvell complains to his love that they do not have the ‘world enough, and time’ and therefore wants her to give in so that he can show his love physically to her before she dies. He tries to win her through flattery by complimenting her body parts: ‘two hundred to adore each breast’ and fear when he tells her that she’ll lose her virginity either way because even in her grave ‘worms shall try that long-preserved virginity’!

In contrast to Marvell, Christina Walsh writes 200 years later of a woman refusing her man as she complains of the 'drudgery and silence' she will have to bear after marriage and also that her freedom shall be lost when she turns into his 'bondslave' to 'bear...children, wearing out' her 'life'. Marvell uses humour, cheekiness like 'my vegetable love should grow vaster than empires' and fear to seduce his lover whereas Walsh fights off her lover telling him why she doesn't want him with much more realistic views.

After reading the different varieties of pre-1900 love poems, I came to the conclusion that some things just don't change with time. A good example of that would be Andrew Marvell. I did not realise that the same cheekiness and male-chauvinistic approach would have been found at that time and that men could be so open and 'sleazy'.

But not all the poems were like that. Lord Byron and Robert Burns were very romantic and complimented their loves 'eyes' and 'smile' which probably is just as common today thinking of valentines cards nowadays and love comments. Burns' idea of his love lasting 'till a' the seas gang dry' and 'the rocks melt wi' the sun' is so touching and in fact these are quite the type of things - I believe - that a modern girl today would love to hear.

I particularly liked the idea that women were just as demanding for respect in the olden days as they are today after reading Christina Walsh's 'A woman to her lover'. I don't think we would expect a woman of that time period to think in such a thoughtful way and be so unaccepting of a man's

chauvinism. It just proves that even women haven't changed and they do demand respect no matter how brainwashed they are.

All in all, it was fun and the poem 'The despairing lover' added some humour to the subject and some were even shocking to know that men could write a love poem to another man, like Shakespeare did.