

‘how do i love thee’,
‘my last duchess’ and
‘a women to her
lover’ essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The speakers in the poetry studied see marriage in very different ways and their attitudes frequently contrast with the popular attitudes towards relationships of the time period. In this assignment I will be focusing on the main poems 'How Do I Love Thee' by E. B. Browning, 'My Last Duchess' by R. Browning and finally 'A Women To Her Lover' which was written by Christina Walsh one of the poems is a sonnet, one of the poems is a dramatic monologue and the last poem is based in free verses .

Each of these poems were all written in the Victorian era, which is quite important because people's attitudes during that era were totally different towards every day life. In this assignment I will be not only analysing many aspects and themes of the three poems with detail but I will explore the language, meaning, form and structure of the poems. In Victorian marriages there always is a typical attitude to be followed. Men in the Victorian era basically rules women's existence women were just specifically used for sex, carrying around babies and making food or entertaining their husbands.

Even though women did not like this attitude based towards then they had to obey or they would be terribly punished. If you look at the poem 'My Last Duchess' it is telling a story in a way rather than a poem. In the poem the duke takes care of his wife or as you may call it his last duchess for a reason as she would not smile at him as she smiled at others. This shows that in the Victorian era any way in which a husband thought your actions were rebellious you would be terribly punished.

The three poems, which I am using for this assignment, are not all typical behaviour and attitudes of what you would of expected as love and marriage

in the Victorian era. In one of the poems which is 'A Women To Her Lover' I have chosen in my perspective and maybe allot more people who have read that piece think it is quite rebellious as the poet Christina Walsh has daringly written this poem on a bases of demands on which her husband should abide by which is usually the man who demands from the woman and she has to listen.

This as you can see is quite a rebellious attitude for the Victorian era and that is why it is a famous poem. Another poem I have chosen is called 'How Do I Love Thee'. This poem does not have a demanding or rebellious attitude to it but has what you would not commonly expect in the Victorian era. The woman actually loves her husband in this poem where as if you look at a poem like 'My Last Duchess' you can clearly see that the woman the duke married did not like him as she never looked at him with loving look which is much more common in the Victorian times than to have a wife who loves you.

So as you can see now not all attitudes in the Victorian era were based on typical marriages. In the Poem 'How Do I Love Thee' I believe it is about how Browning herself feels about her husband. In the poem I believe she is affirming herself of how much she actually loves him maybe I believe that her love is fading for him and needs reminding so she has the strength to carry on loving him throughout life and even after death as she says 'If God choose, I shall love thee better after death' Also as you can see there is a religious element in there, which can be interpreted in many different.

For example she consider religion to be a very important element in her life and maybe puts religion above her love for Robert. I believe there are many different ways in which this poem can be interpreted as you can see one version of interpretation is above. In the poem ' A Woman To Her Lover' I do believe it is about what she wants alone, but you could argue that it is not what only she wants as she states that if you treat me as an equal I will love you and be yours when she says ' I am your forever and our co-equal love'

The poem can be interpreted in many ways I believe as you can think of it as a basis on which she gives rules and he must abide by or you can think of the poem as her Christina Walsh just asking for a fair and equal marriage not one where the man rules all. In the poem ' My Last Duchess' I believe that it is basically a story, which tells you about why he killed his wife and how bad of a person he is in my perspective I believe there is one interpretation of this poem because it is more of a story then a poem.

In a story there are not as many interpretations as a poem because no story can compare to someone's complex imaginative mind. In all I believe that not all these poems I have chosen has more than one possible interpretation. The language and structure used in the poem ' A Women To Her Lover' can be used communicate the meaning in many ways. For example she says some words and phrases to show how she thinks of him like ' Fool I refuse you! And ' Hand holding hand until we reach the heart of god'

The first quote shows how unwanted he is to her and the ways she calls him a fool implies something which can be interpreted in many ways. The second quote tells the reader that she loves him very dearly also you could say that

her love for him is divinely meant because she refers to god in that quote. She uses a major use of alliteration to make that quote sound good and effective. The structure of this poem is a free verse, which is very uncommon to be written in the Victorian days. It contains in it 4 stanzas there are no set amount of lines for each stanza in a free verse.

I believe that Christina Walsh used the structural form of a free verse because it would be easier to communicate what she is trying to say because in each statement she says she keeps one whole stanza for one whole statement making it clearer hence more effective. This structural form is none like any of the other poems I am analysing. In the poem 'How Do I Love Thee' the language in this is very important because Elizabeth keeps re-using the phrase 'I love thee' almost echoing it throughout the whole poem making it a very effective phrase.

In the language she uses an element of religion to communicate the meaning of the poem because she is very religious herself and in the Victorian times back then religion was a very serious aspect of life back then. The structure of this poem is very complex it is a sonnet which must contain no less or more lines than 14. Also in the sonnet it has something called a sestet and octave each containing rhyming couplets at the end of each line for example a rhyming couplet would be 'height' (line 2) and 'sight' (line 3).

The structure of the poem helps communicate the meaning of the poem by using the effects of echoing for example she says this many times 'I love thee' The final poem I will be analysing about language and structure is 'My Last Duchess'. The language in this piece help to communicate the meaning

of what is happening by in-depth description. As you can see if you look at the first 34 lines in the poem you can see that the writer of the poem has spent all his time describing the duchess the way she moves, what she delights in, her faults, the way she responds to others around her.

Also there are some other things in the language of this poems like the excess use of question marks and exclamation marks, these I believe are used to show what the duke is actually feeling and looking like at the moment. The structure of the poem is based on a dramatic monologue with rhyming couplets throughout the poem. I believe there are some similarities about the two poems ' How Do I Love Thee' and ' A Woman To Her Lover' one of the similarities is that the attitudes are not what you would expect from the Victorian times seeing as both of them go against the typical marriage in that period of time.

Also they are both written from a women's perspective and both. The differences between them are in the structural format. They both do not have rhyming couplets and both are not sonnets one poem is a free verse and the other poem is a sonnet, unlike the two poems ' My Last Duchess' and ' How Do I Love Thee' they both have rhyming couplets but they are not all the same ' My Last Duchess' is a dramatic monologue unlike ' How Do I Love Thee'. I don not believe that a woman to her lover and my last duchess have any similarities structurally or in language.

All the three poems I believe were written around the same time in the Victorian period. I think that Christina Walsh's idea of marriage was totally different compared to Elizabeth's idea of marriage. You could say this

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because of the way they write as Elizabeth believes she should love her husband to the depths and so on of life and there should be no need for him to love her back seeing as she never mentions anything about loving equally but Christina believes that she should not only love him but he should return the favour as well. For example Christina says 'Our co-equal love' Meaning one should love etc equally but Elizabeth says in her poem 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways' See as she only mentions her love for him but there is no mention of 'co-equal love' In whole I believe that Christians views of love differ from Elizabeth's because of the way they are presented in their poems.

Also there is an element of religion in both poems 'A Women To Her Lover' and 'How Do I Love Thee' as you can see if you look at both poems you can see both poems refer to god as some divine power when they say 'If God choose' And 'Until we reach the very heart of god' In conclusion I believe there are many links between the three poems and the ideas in a woman to a lover and how do I love thee. These two poems connect very smoothly as you can see I have made some links before. I do find my last duchess appealing but I found that it does not link up that well as the other two poems do.