

The comparison of  
two poems: once  
upon a time and  
sonnet from  
portuguese – how  
do...



The poem 'Once Upon a Time' is written by a male African poet, Gabriel Okara in XXth century. This poem is the story of a grown up man who once was an innocent child. Now the poet reminisces about a time when people were caring and sincere. He regrets that adult world has lost the charm of his childhood years. Poet is addressing the poem to his son, who is just like he was years ago, when he was a child. The poem has three divisions. In the first division, writer is talking about the good past times, which he has lost. The second division is telling us how he learnt behave in life and adapt to adult life. In the third part, author is asking advice from his son on how to laugh, smile and be happy again.

The second poem is Petrarchan (Italian) Sonnet from Portuguese written in XIXth century by a female English poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The sonnet is called 'How Do I Love Thee?' and consists of 2 parts. First part, octave, tells us of the many ways the poet loves her lover. Second, sestet - how the poet loves like a child: she hopes God will permit love to continue into eternity.

There is a regular rhyming pattern in second poem, because it is written as a sonnet, but there is no regular rhyming in the first poem, it is free conversation, as the poet wants to make an image of a fairy-tale, beginning with the words 'Once upon a time...'

In both poems there are religious overtones. In first one you can only feel them, but in second there are words used like Soul, Grace, Being, etc. Also, there are political overtones in both writings.

We can hear personal voices in both poems, as both poets address them to intimate people: Gabriel Okara to his son, Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her lover.

They are also similar, because both poets admire the beauty of child's smile, purity of child's love and sincerity of child's word.

Poems are similar because they both use powerful images to describe the things, but differs because Elizabeth Barrett Browning talks with great sincerity about her lover, while Gabriel Okara talks about insincerity of people and the way they have been exploited by the West. Also, writings are different because in the Gabriel Okara's poem we can feel the nostalgia for the good times that have passed, now left only emptiness and coldness. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet is full of senses, beautiful words and love.

Both poets use powerful techniques – repetitions, anaphora, and alliteration to express their real emotions and to make their poems look even more sensitive.

I liked both poems very much, as each of them are beautiful in their own way, which I could not equalize, but bigger impression for me left a sonnet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, because her writing is closer to my heart and I liked the passion which she expresses to compare her love with beautiful things in life (' My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight/ For the ends of Being and ideal Grace').