

Courtly love



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Extended Response: Explain why Courtly Love is important in shaping your appreciation and understanding of the two chosen sonnets. In doing this you should discuss relevant features of each text, relating them to the conventions of Courtly Love. Courtly love was a medieval conception of nobly and chivalrously expressing love and admiration. The conventions of courtly love are usually that a knight of noble blood would adore and worship a young noble-woman from afar, seeking to protect and win her honour. A famous Renaissance humanist, Francesco Petrarca was a prime example of expressing Courtly Love throughout his sonnets.

Most of his works were addressed to Laura, the mistress in whom he worshipped and longed for, yet knowing he could never physically be with her. Petrarch wrote a collection of 366 lyrics in which he dedicated to Laura, even though his love was not returned. In one sonnet in particular, Sonnet 90, Petrarch descriptively speaks of Laura's beauty and portrays her as a goddess from heaven. He uses the conventional sentiments of Courtly Love by exaggerating the idea of her. For example when he writes, "her eyes were brighter than the radiant west", or describes her as though she could wound with a glance.

She is also portrayed in stereotypical fashion of that era, with golden blonde hair, sparkling eyes, red lips and angelic movement. Another convention in which Petrarch follows is the obsession or infatuation he has with Laura. It is not only based on the poems he creates, but has taken over his own life. Although the love has not been returned, Petrarch speaks of the pain and happiness he acquires from her presence. Even when Laura died, her death caused as much pain for him as when she was alive. The structure of the

sonnet is of 14 lines; an octave of 8 lines, which present the issue and then the sestet, which forms a resolution. The poem also contains many similes, extended metaphors and imagery when describing Laura's physical beauty. A different type of Courtly Love would be seen in Sonnet 130, written by Shakespeare.

In this poem he changes the conventional features of Courtly Love to proclaim his own love in an alternative way. This poem is in some ways a satire mocking of Petrarch's work. Shakespeare describes the physical characteristics of his mistress using ironic comparison.

It begins with the contrast of her physicality to nature, "My mistresses' eyes are nothing like the sun; Coral is far more red than her lips' red." He also compares features in which the stereotypical Laura possesses and turns it around to almost demean his mistress. However, as the poem progresses, it is understood that he does not love her despite her differences; he loves her because of them. She is real, and not just an illusion or exaggeration far from the truth like Laura. Shakespeare makes use of a new structure, through which the simple theme can be developed in the three quatrains and neatly concluded in the final couplet, where the real meaning of the sonnet is concluded. Both of the sonnets even though written centuries apart, conclude the same message of total and consuming love. They have similarities and differences in characteristics and this helps create a broader understanding and appreciation of Courtly Love. Marissa Bird