

Compare and  
contrast 'a red, red,  
rose' by robert burns  
and 'cousin kate' by  
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Both of these poems deal with the subject of love, but their views are almost opposing. Burns whose poem was first published in 1794 writes about an idealised love, while Rossetti who wrote her poem on 18 November 1859, writes with a cynical view of romance. Burns was a famous poet in his day, he was known as "the Ploughman Poet" and his poems were said to be uncomplicated expressions of human nature. Christina Rossetti was also a well-known writer but she was always the second artist in her family after her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti and she was very aware of the second-class status of women in the Victorian age. Both Burns and Rossetti are writing narrative poetry, but unlike Rossetti, Burns is not concerned with social problems. 'A red, red, rose' by Robert Burns.

The first poem, Robert Burns' A red, red rose, is written in 'Scots', being a Scottish form of English, as shown in the language of the second stanza, 'As fair art thou, my bonnie lass' and the fourth stanza, 'And fare thee weel, my only luvie.' It is a lyric poem, which means that it was written to be sung to a musical accompaniment. We can tell this as it has been written in a deliberately simple manner, mostly in monosyllables ('melodie' is the longest word in the poem) and in alternate iambic tetrameters (four stresses in a line) and trimeters (three stresses). Iambic rhythms are simple, with a weak stress followed by a strong one. There are no complicated rhythms as we may find in modern poetry.

This poem is written as a farewell to a loved one. Burns sets a romantic, relaxed atmosphere and his narrative portrays an idealized love for a woman. He uses incremental repetition to intensify his emotion, and the word 'luvie' is used seven times throughout the poem. In the first stanza, he

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sets a romantic introduction using similes. First he compares his love to " a red, red rose" and then a melody ' that's sweetly played in tune.

' These are not meant to be literal but to be examples of beauty and perfection. He also uses the word ' June' which gives the reader that reminder of the first month of summer, and this in turn gives images of flowers, happiness, marriage and love. In the second stanza, he compliments his lover by calling her a ' bonnie lass' (meaning a " beautiful lady") and declares his love as never-ending by using an impossibility ('till a` the seas gang dry'). He keeps on listing impossibilities throughout the poem, and this makes us smile at the humour and also understand how deep his love is. In the third stanza, Robert Burns gives the reader an image of the seashore by the language he uses, ' seas, rocks, sands'. The word " sands" can also be seen as referring to the sands in an hourglass, running through the narrow passage and marking out time.

This gives us a hint that time will be a concern in the poem, and this is proven when the narrator tells his love " fare thee weel" in the final stanza, in other words ' goodbye'. In the final stanza the reader feels a slight sense of sadness but also hope as the narrator promises to return. The narrator still emphasizes his love for her as he says ' And I will come again, my luvie, Tho` it were ten thousand mile! ' As a reader after reading the poem you feel quite sad but very hopeful. It shows a man who is deeply in love but has to go away. We are not told why or where but it gives the impression it may be away to sea.

From the images he has given us (" rocks", " sea", " sands"), it is as if he is standing at the seashore and telling us what he can see. This makes the poem sound spontaneous, as if he has made it up on the spot, and emphasizes how much emotion he feels at having to leave his love. ' Cousin Kate' by Christina Rossetti Unlike Robert Burns, Christina Rossetti's poem Cousin Kate shows a cynical view of love. This poem is the narrator, an unknown lady who tells us about a man she loved who made her pregnant and left her, whom she now has lost to her cousin Kate.

This poem is written in the same style as Burns' A red, red rose, with alternate tetrameters and trimeters, but Rossetti uses more complicated language and she is telling a sad and deep story in her poem. In the opening stanza our nameless narrator tells us she was a cottage maiden, ' maiden' meaning both an unmarried girl and also an old-fashioned word for ' a virgin'. She gives us an insight of what her life was like before, putting her in a countryside setting. She also gives us an image of what she looked like, ' my flaxen hair', ' hardened by sun and air'. We understand that she was both very pretty and used to working hard for a living, which emphasizes that she was not looking for a man.

This means that she was an innocent victim of a richer man. This is shown by the repetition of " Why did a great lord find me out? " In the second stanza, she tells us how the lord (the " lord of the manor" in her farming community) lured her to be his mistress and gave her joy and love but then things changed. She uses a paradox when she says she led ' a shameless shameful life,' meaning she was ' shameless' when she was in love but ' shameful' was society's view. This is a clever contradiction that makes us aware of the <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-a-red-red-rose-by-robert-burns-and-cousin-kate-by-christina-rossetti-essay/>

difference between her view and society's view. She also states she was 'an unclean thing' which shows Victorian social standards.

She compares how he treated her with two similes - 'he wore me like a silken knot' and 'he changed me like a glove'. This makes us see that he charmed his way in, got what he wanted and now has found someone else. Rossetti gives us a different opinion of men (in Burns' poem he declares his love for only his lover, whereas here we dislike the lord for using our unknown narrator). In the third stanza, we find out how the poem got its name. The first line starts with an ironic contrast between title and family relationship, 'O Lady Kate, my cousin Kate'. We now also find out that the lord pushed her aside for her cousin ('Chose you, and cast me by').

She describes how the lord met cousin Kate in an innocent background ('he saw you at your fathers gate'). This is characteristic of the pastoral genre of poetry, where love stories are set against the innocence of nature. In Cousin Kate this love story is a story of betrayal. This contrasts with the innocent and beautiful setting. In the fourth stanza we see once again society's opinion of the narrator ('the neighbours call you good and pure, call me an outcast thing'). We also see that cousin Kate has what our narrator wants and also her jealousy that cousin Kate only got his promise of marriage because she did not let herself be seduced by him ('Because you were so good and pure').

This shows the difference between what society calls 'good' and what we would call 'good'. We sympathise with the narrator and not with Kate, who was not 'good' in her behaviour towards her cousin. In the fifth stanza the

narrator show anger and says that her love was true whilst Kate's will easily be washed away (' O cousin Kate, my love was true, Your love was writ in sand'). The narrator writes this paragraph as a direct address to Kate. She also appeals to Kate's sense of family loyalty and states that if she'd been in cousin Kate's shoes, and seen how the " lord" had treated her relative, then she would have been loyal to Kate and refused to marry him when he asked. The tone of the poem here is angry and bitter, with repetition of " if" and " I would" which intensifies the message.

In the ending stanza we gain the knowledge that gives the poem its final message. We find out that the narrator has a son and her attitude has changed from being ' unclean' to a celebration of her status as a single mother. This is a surprising attitude in a Victorian poem, because the narrator would have seemed immoral to Victorian society, but the narrator shows no real concern for society's opinion and puts the emphasis on the word " pride" rather than " shame" when she describes her son. The narrator now shows her anger to her cousin and not to the lord (who is described as her son's " father") which means that it is possible that she secretly wishes that the lord will come back to her as she has the son her cousin doesn't. It could also be that the narrator sees Kate's failure to bear a child as a just punishment for the way Kate treated her.

In conclusion both poems as we can see are based on love, but whereas Burns shows us a warm romantic love (' I will luvve thee still, my dear') in Rossetti' poem the romantic love has turned sour and the only lasting love is in fact maternal love. This is shown by the narrator's love and pride in her son (' my fair-haired son, my shame, my pride, cling closer, closer yet'). I <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-a-red-red-rose-by-robert-burns-and-cousin-kate-by-christina-rossetti-essay/>

personally prefer Robert Burns's poem 'A red, red, rose', to Christina Rossetti's 'Cousin Kate'. Christina Rossetti leaves the reader, me, feeling sorry for her, not only because of what has happened to her but also because she is living for a dream that will never come true. She shows jealousy towards her cousin but uses the fact that she has a son by the Lord (and her cousin does not) as an object to keep her dream alive. Rossetti makes us feel sad for the narrator but shows that she is bitter and jealous, which lessens my sympathy for her.

Whereas Robert Burns I enjoyed reading and did read over many times because it is light hearted, warm and easy reading. It also shows of a man that is deeply in love with his lover and has written this poem to show his passionate love for her. The way he writes this poem makes the reader, me, feel as if we are there and can see how beautiful his love is. I felt joy and delight just thinking of how devoted he feels towards his lover. This poem left a smile on my face and a warmth in my heart.