

How pre 1914 poets  
have expressed  
different aspects of a  
theme, over a set  
period...

[Profession](#), [Poet](#)



In my essay, I want to discuss the different aspects of love, which are presented by several of the Romantic poets who wrote during this period of great poetic creativity. I am going to discuss how one group of poets saw love as a pleasant experience, whilst the other group of poets see love as more of an unhappy experience. Romanticism is a particular genre consisting of both a literary and artistic movement. It was a rebellion against classicism and philosophical rationalism, which had an emphasis on reason.

The poets involved, were individuals like John Keats, Lord Byron, Shelley etc., who focused on their highly personal response to life. First of all, I am going to discuss the poems that convey love as an unhappy experience. These poems are: "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" by John Keats; "When We Two Parted" by Lord Byron; and "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning. La Belle Dame Sans Merci is about a knight who meets a beautiful woman, and is enveloped in the spell that she weaves around him.

She represents freedom, and a life without restrictions, a life that is very far removed from the industrial age in which the poem is set. She seduces the knight and feeds him with exotic fruit. She weeps, sighs, declares her love for him, and then lulls him to sleep." She wept and sigh'd full sore, And then I shut her wild wild eyes, With kisses four.

"She is about to exact her revenge on him - on mankind by destroying him, but then she's gone, leaving the knight on a cold hillside. In the knight's dream, he sees heroic figures calling out to him that he is being trapped by the love of a beautiful woman." They cried - 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci!'"

The message that this poem tries to convey is that love always causes pain,

so there is no point in putting yourself through it. In a way it is saying that love is the cause of most of the pain that we experience in our lives.

The poet, John Keats, deliberately uses archaic language to evoke what he believed were the values of the medieval period, e. g.: honour and courage.” A faery’s child”” She took me to her elfin grot” When We Two Parted, is also a poem that conveys love as an unhappy and disappointing experience. It is about a man, who was in love with a woman, but then she had an affair and they parted.” Thy vows are all broken.

“ Even though he is hurt, confused, angry, and regretful, he still has feelings for her.” Long, long shall I rue thee, Too deeply to tell.” This poem is written in the first person, which gives it a more personal touch. What Lord Byron is trying to capture in this poem, is that not only does love cause heartache, misery, and regret, but also that it never lasts forever. When people fall in love, it is wonderful and exciting at first, but then they often get bored and just want to move on. It is possible that Lord Byron wrote this poem based on a personal encounter.

In When We Two Parted, Lord Byron repeats particular words, eg: “ silence” “ tears”. This gives the poem more affection, and clearly outlines that love is unpleasant. Also, he uses alternate rhyme.” When we two partedIn silence and tearsHalf broken – heartedTo sever for years” The final poem that conveys love as unhappy is My Last Duchess. In this poem, the duke is talking about his late wife whilst looking at a portrait of her.

We get the impression that even though he feels quite bitter towards her, he still loves her. He thinks she was flirtatious towards other men." Too easily impressed; She liked whate'er she looked on, and her looks went everywhere." This also implies that the Duke might have been a bit jealous of the Duchess. The Duke says that she enjoyed all the luxuries that being a Duchess gave her.

" The bough of cherries some officious fool Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule she rode with round the terrace - all and each would draw from her alike the approving speech." This poem is quite mysterious and is set out in the form of a dramatic monologue. It is an ironic representation of the relationship between two people. Robert Browning has used rhyming couplets for this poem, and it is set out in short lines that help to get his point across." That's my last Duchess painted on the wall, Looking as if she were alive, I call that piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands worked busily a day, and there she stands." He is communicating by way of poem that love is heartbreaking, depressing, and sorrowful, but if you do lose your love then you should just move on.

Following this, I will now talk about the poems that convey love as a pleasant experience. These poems are: " First Love" by John Clare; and " How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. First Love is about a man talking about his first love. The love he is describing is everlasting and eternal. It hits him very forcefully, as we can see from the word " struck".

The love is sweet and pure." Like a sweet flower" This love is shown to have physical effects on him." My legs refused to walk away." He feels that this love has turned his world upside down.

" The trees and bushes round the placeSeemed midnight at noonday." He believes that she knows what he is thinking, even though he hasn't said anything. He implies that she has read his mind." She seemed to hear my silent voice." He expresses the fact that he has lost his heart to this woman, and he experiences this intensity of emotion for now" My heart has left its dwelling placeAnd can return no more.

" John Clare was one of a series of romantic poets. He was one of a group of poets who were concerned with passion and imagination. In their poems the Romantics try to capture emotions and the essence of passion. In the poem " First Love", Clare is concerned with capturing that first magical moment of love before it is lost. Also, he tried to record it as a pure and glistening moment. Some of the techniques he used to do this are: alternate rhyme, rhetorical questions, and a regular pattern of eight lines to each stanza.

" And there my blood rushed to my faceAnd took my sight awayThe trees and bushes round the placeSeemed midnight at noonday." Alternate rhyme - " Are flowers the winter's choice?" The final poem that I am going to talk about is How Do I Love Thee? This poem consists of all the different ways that a woman loves a man. In total, there are seven ways in which she expresses her love. All of these images that are expressed in this poem are

examples of abstract images. That means that you can't measure the love that she feels. E.

g.: She loves him intensely-" I love thee to the depth and breadth and heightMy soul can reach." She loves him both artificially and naturally-" I love thee to the level of every day'sMost quiet need, by sun and candlelight." She loves him in all innocence-" And with my childhood's faith" Most importantly, she loves him eternally-" I shall but love thee after death." This poem takes the form of a sonnet, with a regular rhythm, rhyme scheme and structure.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning has used comparisons to try and express in words, the quality and quantity of her love. She has also expressed the strength and quality of her love, by using many slippery images. In my essay, I have discussed how pre 1914 poets have conveyed love in their poems. Some of these were happy, and some were unhappy. Most of the poems that were written during this period of time were about love.

This must mean that many of the poets found it quite an important topic to write about, and it was easy for them to express, as most of them based their poems on personal experiences.