

# Comment on themes of love and loss in 'a quoi bon dire' by charlotte mew.

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Comment on themes of love and loss in 'A Quoi Bon Dire' A sense of love and loss is portrayed throughout the poem 'A Quoi Bon Dire'. The narrator of the poem has been separated from her lover for a long time. However, despite her loss, their love lives on. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator states that "seventeen years" have passed since she last saw her lover. A sense of loss is soon evoked as there is a dim memory of hearing "something that sounded like goodbye" from all those years ago. It would appear that the narrator refuses to accept that her lover is "dead" as "everybody thinks" that he is gone "But I". Whilst the memory of the "goodbye" is vague and uncertain, there is a much more assertive and confident tone as the first stanza comes to a close. The personal 'I', which is separate from "everybody" at the end of this stanza reveals the narrator's separate view that her lover is not dead, at least in her mind and her memory. The uneven structure, which is continued throughout the poem, could represent the hazy memories, with the regular rhyme scheme representing the consistency of the narrator's love. As the poem continues the narrator admits that she must "say Good-bye too" as she grows "stiff and cold" with age. Although the narrator is now growing "old", the tone in this stanza is not in any way morbid. This is because "everyone sees" her age "But you". The repeated endings of the first stanza and the second stanza with, "But I" and "But you", emphasises how special the love between these two people once was. It suggests that their love is different to all of the other people who are grouped together as "everyone". Furthermore, because the loss of this love happened so many years ago, the narrator is able to remember their relationship as it once was — young and

carefree. Whilst the loss of her lover is indeed sad, there is a positive overtone as the relationship can remain forever young. He will never see her grow old. The final stanza of the poem highlights the idea that death will eventually join the narrator and her lover together again with a suggestion of an 'other-worldly' reunion. The line, "while over there" guides us towards the view that she will be 'crossing over' "there". However, the lovers remain very much separate from other people. The final line of the poem, "You will have smiled, I shall have tossed your hair" stands alone. It does not fit into the four line structure of the other two stanzas. This represents the way that the lovers will stand together, united but separate in the after-life. This is similar to the way their love stood apart and lived on in the other two stanzas when "everyone" else assumed it was dead. However, there is certainly no sense of bitterness. In fact, it is rather whimsical that the narrator imagines their relationship will continue in a similar secure and feel-good way with the light-hearted 'smile' and 'tossing' of "your hair". Although the narrator and her lover stand together but separate, they are able to observe that some "boy and girl will meet and kiss and...". A quick pace is created in this line through the description of these two nameless young people and how they will behave on a beautiful "fine morning in a sunny lane". The repetition of 'and' also adds to the feeling of pace and excitement that young love is in the air. There is an irony within this observation as the two young people "swear/That nobody can love their way again". Perhaps the narrator's feeling of love is not so very different or separate after all. This adds a reflective and wistful quality as she imagines that other young people will be able to love in the same way that she loves

or loved. In the title she states, " A Quoi Bon Dire", ' what's the good' and the answer may be found in the final stanza. The ' good' is that young love will continue in a cycle.