

# The beggar woman by william king, to his coy mistress

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



" The Beggar Woman", by William King, " To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell and " Valentine" By Carol-Ann Duffy are all pre-1900 poems which focus on the topic of love and relationships. In this piece of work I will look at the attitudes towards love and relationships in these three poems as presented in the text. The first poem I will look at is " The Beggar Woman" by William King. This poem is set in the seventeenth century when women had no rights, and is about a young gentleman hunter in the woods with his party which he is then separated from.

On his way he spots a young beggar woman who he is surprised by as she is quite clean and fresh looking and he is instantly attracted to her. He then asks her to sleep with him, after much arguing she finally obliges and they go through the woods to find a suitable place. Finally, they find one, and the woman's child Bobby seems to be causing a great disturbance so the young hunter offers to strap the baby onto his back. The young beggar woman quickly hands over the baby and departs, leaving baby Bobby with the poor man.

There are two main themes to consider here. One is that the woman is trying to teach the man a lesson about being responsible for his own actions. Another theme here from the mans side again is power or control because the man propositions the woman with sex, so this suggests to the reader that it is all the man is interested in and because he is rich he feels he can do as he pleases. The language used in the beggar woman is very formal and old-fashioned.

The fact first of all that the hunter is describes as a " gentleman" suggests that he would have belonged to the upper class society, also hunting was one of the upper class sports or activities to do in the seventeenth century so this suggests that he was rich and again " upper-class". He then goes on to describe the woman as a 'game' because that is all he really sees her as. (A bit of fun and sex on the side) Finally language such as 'squire' meaning man or 'gentleman' is used; all this is very old-fashioned language, which is not really used, in this modern day.

The structure to this poem is broken down into rhyming couplets which are basically a certain number of syllables per line as William King may have thought that this would create an effect on the reader and this would make the poem 'flow' better. This is a very popular technique used in poetry even today. One example of rhyming couplets from " The Beggar Woman" is; " A beggar by her trade; yet no so mean, But that her cheeks were fresh and linen clean. "

The mood that William King creates is Irony in a way because the man is about to have sex with the woman with a lack of contraception so it is ironic how he is the one who ends up burdened with the child as the woman doesn't get pregnant. Also, the mood drifts throughout the poem from happiness, when the man thinks he's going to get to sleep with the beggar woman but then the woman leaves the child with him to teach him that you have to take responsibility for your own actions which is therefore the moral of the story, but this is the point when the mood of the story drifts from happy to unhappy.

The second poem I will look at is " To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell. It is all about a man confessing his love to a woman who is referred to as the Mistress and he is trying to seduce her and make her sleep with him. Again, similarly to the beggar woman this poem has two main themes which are Seduction and Coyness, unlike the beggar woman though these two are linked together. However much the man tries to seduce to woman and persuade her into having sex with him but this woman is being coy which means she is pretending to be the sweet, little, innocent girl but she is only doing this to create an effect.

He then continues to insist that he and the woman should take the opportunity and "seize the day" while they can. The language used in this is again very old-fashioned but this time very romantic. Lines such as " My Vegetable love shall grow" makes the man sound very in love with her. This is because vegetables grow but slowly. So this is saying to the reader that even though love grows slowly it is still a growing thing. The lover is so devoted to the woman that he adores everything about her from her body to just her general presence.

These are all signs that show that the man is madly in love with her and wants nothing else but her. Another few lines, which really caught my eye, were " Thou by the Indian Ganges' side Should'st rubies find: I by the tide Of Humber would complain, I would Love you ten years before the flood, And you should, if you please, refuse Till the conversion of the Jews. " This is again because it shows the real extent of how much this man wants this woman and is love with her.

He sees himself as being almost inferior to her which usually wouldn't happen in the seventeenth century, the time when the poem was written because just like in the time of "The Beggar Woman" women had no rights or status, and everything was in favour of males because they were seen as stronger and superior compared to women. This man compares this woman to the River Ganges which is a sacred river in India. Again at the time the poem was written, England was beginning its exploration and discovery into the exotic east, which explains why Marvell used the River Ganges in his poem, the woman is obviously very flattered by this.

He then goes on to compare himself to the River Humber in Hull, England. The River Humber isn't really very nice at all while the Ganges' is beautiful, hot and exotic. After this, he goes on to say how he's always loved her even ten years before the flood, and will continue to love her during the conversion of the Jews. The flood that is being referred to here is the one from Noah's Ark which is from the books of genesis which suggests it happened shortly after Creation of all mankind and then he says I will only stop loving you when the Jews convert.

Speaking historically, the Jews will never convert until the end of the world. So the man is just trying to say I will never stop loving you. This poem is structured almost as an argument. It talks about things that are completely opposite, for example, that you should enjoy yourself but that there are bad things like dying happening in the world. It then goes on to say that because of both things you should live life to the full. The Beggar woman and To His

Coy Mistress both convey this same message, however, these messages contradict each other.

In *The Beggar Woman*, William King is saying that not many people have time for romance or love. Andrew Marvel, in *To His Coy Mistress*, says everyone should have time for love and romance so the attitudes towards love and relationships vary here. This poem is also structured into If, But and So sections, so basically the man is saying If we have sex then everything will be okay, But if you keep protesting your going to get too old and then it will be too late, So just get on with it and give in, which continues my point about the poem being structured almost as an argument. "Valentine" by Carol Ann Duffy is the third and final poem I will be looking at. This poem is about a lover giving their beloved an onion instead of a traditional Valentines Day gift such as a satin heart, red rose or kissogram. The themes presented in this poem are light heartedness and commercialism. Again, just like "To his coy mistress" these themes are linked together. The poem is so light hearted but the 'first-person' speaker talks about giving an onion instead of a red rose or something traditional like that which then changes the theme from 'light hearted' to Commercialism.

One of the main language techniques used here is the extended metaphor of the Onion which represents the depth and sincerity of a relationship. First of all, it is multi-layered which is like in a relationship where you can peel back each layer to discover or reveal more about a person and who they really are. Another point about the Onion is that when you cut them they have the tendency to make you cry which symbolizes the bad times in relationships as

well as the good. The scent of an Onion is long lasting and clings to your fingers.

Superficial relationships are usually short lived such as in " The Beggar Woman" but relationships which are based on genuine feelings are long lasting such as in " To His Coy Mistress". The platinum rings in the centre of an onion echo the size, shape and colour of a wedding ring which is a token of love and commitment. " True Love" is not without its perils. There is one line which especially gripped me which was " Lethal. " Its Just made me think why is that " slap bang" in the middle of this poem, then I realised. It is there to emphasise to us once again that love can bring you grief as well as joy.

The poem " Valentine" is written in free-verse form. Carol Ann Duffy must have used this unique technique in connotation to the unique present she is giving to her lover in the poem because it creates great effect upon the reader Also, with a link to the theme of commercialism she could be writing it in such a way that she's angry because of her beliefs about a commercial Valentines Day and not really taking much time or putting much effort in. Personally, I think that all these poems are linked but in different ways.

There is only one way that I can think of and that is that they are all to do with love. Two of the poems " The Beggar Woman" and " To His Coy Mistress" both involve men trying to seduce women but in different ways. One just thinks that he can get whatever he wants because he is rich, the other man feels to get what he wants he must flatter this woman with many different compliments, but still scare her at parts by saying things like " it

will be too late" and " worms will try that well-preserved virginity" but this is only done to persuade the woman that little bit more.

In today's day and age a man would not just go up to a woman and proposition her with sex but back in the seventeenth century things were a lot different with men being the 'superior race' and women being the 'inferior'. Meanwhile, valentine is good for describing attitudes towards love and relationships. On the one hand, the woman doesn't like Valentines Day and the whole commercialised view of it but then she goes on to like it but would prefer giving an onion but this is understandable as it represents the good and bad times in a relationship, getting to know a person better and emphasising just how good or bad a relationship can be.