

My love is like to ice



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Love sometimes seems unattainable but you don't truly know it is out of reach unless you try, Edmund Spenser portrays this message in his poem *My Love Is Like to Ice*. This poem was taken out from his literary work *The Amoretti*, which was written as a part of the courtship of his second wife Elizabeth Boyle. This poem can be seen as his struggle for love, knowing the intent of the poet's reason for writing such beautiful poetry gives us the advantage when analyzing. Spenser uses two interesting elements to convey his feelings and emotions in reference to love to show us why love is mutual and shouldn't be given up upon.

Symbolism is seen through out the poem very often in respect to human emotions and feelings. The nature of these two elements shows the reader that there is no such thing as impossible love. Spenser splits his poem into four different sections, each section being a question, which illustrate human emotions and feelings through different states of love. The first section carries its own tone and mood, set by the first line, *My love is like to ice, and I to fire*, Spenser chooses two elements that are incompatible and completely opposite from each other giving the feeling of impossibility, hopelessness.

He personifies his love different from himself in affect to give it its own personality so that he may relate it to himself and others easier. He uses a metaphor to display his negative response towards love. He questions himself in affect to love by giving him the element of fire, and love ice. The attributes of fire towards ice is conflicting, fire melts ice and ice diminishes fire. How come it then that this her cold so great, he is asking why is that the one he has affections for is cold, cold connotes emotionless, impassive,

inexpressive, but looking deeper, the cold represents her love, that is unresponsive to the poet's fire.

Is not dissolved through my so-hot desire, ice is known for its strength, its rock-solid, unyielding, and firm, however, when fire is applied next to ice it melts becoming water. He, as the fire who has a burning desire cannot melt this love that is so sturdy, reassuring that tone of futility. But harder grows the more I her entreat? this further supports the mood of hopelessness. The poet is feeling as if his effort towards this woman is not only futile but causing her to become more insensitive towards his fire.

How can fire make her ice harder? This is answered by the poem's metaphorical meaning explored further in the essay. He keeps furthering the meaning of pointlessness. He doesn't fully realize his situation and the nature of his love towards this medium that has negative effects to his actions. Through the second section, the poet sets the mood towards perseverance, Spenser picks ice not just because of its general characteristics, but because it has many different forms such as ice, water, and steam, identical to love.

When fire and ice are present together, the ice does not just melt instantaneously. Time is a special part of the process, similar to love. Secondly, even if the ice melts there is still water after, and even still there is steam. However, water cannot turn into steam without fire or heat. Putting that into a metaphorical sense, love takes time, perseverance, and determination. It seems, as the poet does not quite understand that yet

during this time in the poem. But I burn much more in boiling sweat. Sweat connotes work and moisture.

In other words he is in a state of anxiety and impatience perspiring because of his love and the heat caused by the one he adores. He still does not know why his love is going through all these states. His love is changing forms, just as ice does when it melts, transitioning from solid to liquid. And I feel my flames augmented manifold? The poet still feels a bit of confusion, which he still shows by asking questions at the end of each section, his thoughts towards love and the one he adores causes uncertainty, however he feels change in himself the flame.

The Third section has a total turn around through the mood and the tone. The poet's determination is now showing affect. What more miraculous thing may be told that fire which all things melts, should harden ice: Miraculous connotes marvel and wonder, something that wasn't expected. Because of the first and second section, the poem carried the tone of depression and despair. Spenser's ice and fire metaphor is very complex switching from its metaphorical and literal meanings throughout the poem. Ice denotes love while fire symbolizes the poet himself.

The poet states that fire hardened the ice, but how can that happen? Fire melts ice, it does not harden it, however, changing the symbols around and into the metaphorical perspective it could happen. The Poet produced the heat that caused the warm attractions, the burning passions, the melting desires that strengthened and hardened the love between him and his loved one. Spenser shows us through his struggle for love that love requires

patience and perseverance. And ice, which is congealed with senseless cold,  
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?

This line from the poem displays to a certain extent the meaning of love, displaying to the reader that love is mutual. The poet states that the ice kindled the fire, in other words ignited the flame, changing it to the metaphorical perspective, two people ice and fire, both possessing unique attributes. According to this quote, fire melts the ice and by wonderful device the ice fuels the flame, a mutual process. Spencer shows us that even though circumstances may not look very well, that love can change anything through its power. Such is the power of love in gentle mind, that it can alter all the course of kind.

He states ALL the course of kind, he uses two opposite elements; ice and fire, which cannot exist together, and makes them coexist in this poem together. Impossibility is no possibility when it comes to love, the law of nature is strong but love is stronger, the nature of their relationship shown by this metaphor is displayed as impractical, but through the poets struggle he showed that impractical itself is unreasonable to describe love. There is no such thing as impossible love. The poet attempted what seemed to be impossible and broke new grounds. He went so far as to break the law of nature by hardening ice by fire.