

Compare and
contrast to his coy
mistress and john
donne's the flea
essay



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To His Coy Mistress, written by Andrew Marvell in 1681 and The Flea, written by John Donne in 1633 are examples of metaphysical poetry.

Both of the poems try to convince their partner to have sex with the poet. The poems are also examples of dramatic lyric poetry because the poet addresses another person and is directly talking to them, but the person is not actually saying anything in response. The poet of The Flea uses a flea as a metaphor to encourage his partner to have sex with him by using things that the flea does and translating them into the situation they're in. Andrew Marvell, in To His Coy Mistress uses words such as " rubies" as metaphors to try and convince his partner that if they don't have sex now soon she will be dead or too ugly for them to have sex. The poets use lots of different language techniques to help them to convince their partners to have sex with them.

Some techniques are used in both poems; an example of this is the use of metaphors. In The Flea, Andrew Marvell uses the flea as a metaphor to convince his partner to have sex with him by saying " And in this flea our two bloods mingled be thou know'st that this cannot be said a sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead. this shows us that the poet thinks that because their blood is already mixed within the flea it will not be shameful or a sin for them to have sex now. The poet uses the flea as the metaphor also because it is small and insignificant, which implies that is how he thinks of her virginity.

In To His Coy Mistress, the poet uses a metaphor when he writes " And tear our pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life. this metaphor is used as a sexual innuendo in which it signifies a man entering a woman and

it also refers to the civil war of a canon ball bursting through gates, this is persuasive as it suggest destruction and that if they do not have sex it will have been a waste. However, they also use different techniques too as To His Coy Mistress is the only poem which uses similes, an example is when he says, " like amorous birds of prey" he uses this to show that he is sexually hungry. This is used to encourage his partner to have sex with him by saying how he wants her. He uses similes to describe her in a positive way, to flatter and compliment her. This helps the reader because it lets them know what is happening.

The poems also both use imagery so that the reader and the poet's partner can imagine what is being described and create a picture in their head of the scene. In The Flea the use of imagery is different to that of To His Coy Mistress because in the flea it is used as a visual image to allow the poet's partner to see what he is talking about and to be persuaded as it reinforces the narrators idea of her loss of virginity being as small and insignificant as the flea is. Whereas, in To His Coy Mistress, the poet says, " My vegetable love should grow vaster than empires, but more slow. " In this quote, the poem is using phallic imagery as it refers to his love growing slowly like the vegetables.

In To His Coy Mistress Andrew Marvell uses exaggeration to persuade his partner, this is shown when he says, " An Hundred years should go to praise thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze; two hundred to adore each breast; but thirty thousand to the rest; an age at least to every part; and the last age should show your heart. this shows us that the writer loves who he is talking to very much and would spent a long time trying to prove that and
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appreciating her and her body. This use of exaggeration is used to flatter her, which encourages the woman to have sex with him. In *The Flea* exaggeration is also used to persuade and to convey the message that the Flea, as a metaphor, is important due to what it represents. You can see this method when Marvell writes, " Though use make you apt to kill me, let not to that self-murder added be.

This tells us that she thinks that's sex is important and that it would be unacceptable for her to kill the flea, and that it would kill him and the idea of what the flea is. The use of the words " kill me" shows that he will be emotionally compromised and that his pride will be hurt if the flea is killed because it is basically him. This is used to make her feel guilty, and convince her to have sex with him and not kill the flea as she would be killing other things too. In both poems the use of pronouns involves the poet's partner within it without her actually saying anything. It also allows the reader to know how the partner is feeling without her telling us.

We see in *The Flea* when the partner becomes irritated with the narrator as he says, " Cruel and sudden, hast thou since purpled thy nail in the blood of innocence? " This tells us that she has killed the flea and ignored the poet. By using " thy" and " thou" we see the reader emphasise these words to show us how the woman is feeling. In *To His Coy Mistress* we see the poet use pronouns so as to directly engage the partner as he directs his words at her. We're shown this when he says, " I would love you ten years before the Flood; and you should, if you please, refuse. " The use of the word " you" shows that the poet is directly aiming this sentence to his partner which involves her in the poem and conversation.

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Also the use of “ you” emphasises the fact that he is trying to please and persuade only her and no one else. The two poems have a regular rhyme scheme that follows two patterns that are similar. The Flea has a rhyming scheme of AA BB CC DDD which is the same in each stanza. The pairing of AA is obvious in the first two lines, “ MARK but this flea, and mark in this, how little that which thou deniest me is;” The use of rhyming couplets and having a regular rhyme scheme helps make the poets message stick in your head and makes it more memorable. This makes it more persuasive as this message is repeated.

In To His Coy Mistress the rhyme scheme is the same however it does not go DDD it goes DD and continues to JJ. This evidence that DDD is not there but DD is in lines 7 & 8 – D “ Of Humber would complain. I would and – D Love you ten years before the Flood. Also, The Flea uses metaphors in the first stanza as he tries to persuade her by using ‘ the flea’ as a sexual reference. He also uses other language that relates to sex depending on context and the way it is used, for example, “ and now sucks thee”. The second stanza focuses on religion and that it is a religious sin because they are not having sex “ and sacrilege, three sins in killing three”.

In the final stanza John Donne uses guilt against his partner, to convince her that the flea’s life will have been wasted if they don’t have sex, as she has killed it, “ Will waste, as this flea’s death took life from thee”. This use of each stanza conveying a different message is shown in ‘ To His Coy Mistress’. In the first stanza he itemises her body parts and exaggerates to flatter her, as this will encourage her to have sex as it shows he loves her and what he thinks of her. In the second stanza the poet uses the subject of <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-to-his-coy-mistress-and-john-donnes-the-flea-essay/>

the future to help persuade her, as he changes the mood of the poem to imagine what the future might be “ And your quaint honour turn to dust. The final stanza then ends on a lighter note by referring to the excitement of sex “ and now, like am’rous birds of prey” This is extremely effective because he makes sure that the slightly meaner message is sandwiched between the two exciting and loving messages, meaning that the woman forgets the horrible part in the middle of the poem. In both poems the message of each stanza follow a similar pattern, however what’s in the content may be different in each poem the method which is used by the poet remains similar.

The narrative voice is very different between the two poems. The Flea uses quite a harsh tone when read aloud as he uses blunt words and sharp indentations and causes the narrator to speak in quite a short and direct tone. Whereas in To His Coy Mistress the poet includes many longer, softer sounding words such as, “ And while thy willing soul transpires, at every pore with instant fires. ” This makes the reader speak in quite a slow, smooth way, which also shows how the poet uses language and tone to persuade his partner to have sex with him as it flows and is smooth which entices the feeling of romance. The use of the rhyming couplets gives the poems quite calm and smooth rhythm as the end of each line slides along the tongue making it easier to read and a smoother style. Overall, To His Coy Mistress has a much more romantic and loving tone, whilst The Flea has a much more forceful and aggressive tone as the poet uses his partners own beliefs and words against her.

So To His Coy Mistress is much more persuasive in my opinion because it sounds nicer. There are many ways how a modern and contemporary audience would respond to the poems. Both poems can be read by a wide audience, which could be read in different ways. The responses will be influenced by many things such as the ethnic background of the reader or the age or even religion, so it makes it difficult to analyse the way in which an audience will respond to the poems and how they will take them. Due to the period it was written, for people at that time it would have been seen as more acceptable and normal to encourage your partner to sex with you in this way.

At the time of the poem loss of virginity before marriage was frowned upon and quite largely a sin. However, in modern times it is not as frowned upon as it once was and so it is not as important as it was at the time of the poem. The Flea, with its aggressive and forceful tone may cause the reader to think that the poet was trying to force his partner to have sex with him and go against what she wanted, but when you look at To His Coy Mistress, which has a soft loving tone, you would see it as he is trying to be romantic and flatter her which can be seen as acceptable in a modern society.

Furthermore, as the idea of sex before marriage is found to be unacceptable in the poems an audience today may find this does not apply to them as it is socially accepted that you can have sex before marriage and there are no rules against this.

Overall, I think To His Coy Mistress is a more persuasive poem as its tries to persuade the woman in a more loving manner. Also because Andrew Marvell creates a different atmosphere in the lead up to sex and makes everything

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seem more romantic and more about the two of them rather than just the man. However The Flea shows how it's all about the man wanting to have sex and shows aggression and an almost forcefulness from the man which I think is not at all persuasive to the woman and does not make her want to have sex with him.