

Poems and their themes.	Romance	Fulfilment	Loss	Independence	Strong Bonds	Admiration	Distance	Desire	Nature	Death	Memory	Marriage	Gender	Culture
<i>When We Two Parted</i>			Loss				Distance			Death	Memory		Gender	Culture
<i>Love's Philosophy</i>	Romance	Fulfilment						Desire	Nature					
<i>Porphyria's Lover</i>	Romance	Fulfilment						Desire		Death			Gender	
<i>Sonnet 29 – 'I think of thee!'</i>	Romance						Distance	Desire	Nature					
<i>Neutral Tones</i>			Loss				Distance		Nature	Death	Memory			
<i>The Farmer's Bride</i>	Romance		Loss				Distance	Desire	Nature			Marriage	Gender	Culture
<i>Walking Away</i>				Independence	Strong Bonds		Distance				Memory			
<i>Letters From Yorkshire</i>					Strong Bonds	Admiration	Distance	Desire	Nature					
<i>Eden Rock</i>			Loss		Strong Bonds		Distance			Death	Memory			
<i>Follower</i>					Strong Bonds	Admiration	Distance		Nature		Memory			
<i>Mother, any distance</i>				Independence	Strong Bonds		Distance							
<i>Before You Were Mine</i>				Independence	Strong Bonds	Admiration		Desire			Memory		Gender	
<i>Winter Swans</i>	Romance	Fulfilment					Distance	Desire	Nature					
<i>Singh Song!</i>	Romance	Fulfilment						Desire				Marriage		Culture
<i>Climbing My Grandfather</i>					Strong Bonds	Admiration			Nature		Memory			

Compare the ways that family relationships are presented in *Eden Rock* and one other poem.

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:

My father, twenty-five, in the same suit

Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack

Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress

5

Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,

Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.

Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.

She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight

From an old H.P. sauce-bottle, a screw

10

Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out

The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.

The sky whitens as if lit by three suns.

My mother shades her eyes and looks my way

Over the drifted stream. My father spins

15

A stone along the water. Leisurely,

They beckon to me from the other bank.

I hear them call, 'See where the stream-path is!

Crossing is not as hard as you might think.'

I had not thought that it would be like this.

20

Compare the ways death is presented in *Eden Rock* and one other poem.

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:

My father, twenty-five, in the same suit

Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack

Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress

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They beckon to me from the other bank.

I hear them call, 'See where the stream-path is!

Crossing is not as hard as you might think.'

I had not thought that it would be like this.

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Compare the ways that power is presented in *Porphyria's Lover* and one other poem.

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listen'd with heart fit to break. 5
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneel'd and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form 10
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soil'd gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And call'd me. When no voice replied, 15
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair, 20
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever. 25
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:

So, she was come through wind and rain. 30

Be sure I look'd up at her eyes

Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipp'd me; surprise

Made my heart swell, and still it grew

While I debated what to do. 35

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

In one long yellow string I wound

Three times her little throat around, 40

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

I warily oped her lids: again

Laugh'd the blue eyes without a stain. 45

And I untighten'd next the tress

About her neck; her cheek once more

Blush'd bright beneath my burning kiss:

I propp'd her head up as before,

Only, this time my shoulder bore 50

Her head, which droops upon it still:

The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

That all it scorn'd at once is fled,

And I, its love, am gain'd instead! 55

Porphyria's love: she guess'd not how

Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirr'd,

And yet God has not said a word!

Compare the ways desire is presented in *Porphyria's Lover* and one other poem.

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listen'd with heart fit to break. 5
When glided in Porphyria; straight
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Blush'd bright beneath my burning kiss:

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Only, this time my shoulder bore 50

Her head, which droops upon it still:

The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

That all it scorn'd at once is fled,

And I, its love, am gain'd instead! 55

Porphyria's love: she guess'd not how

Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirr'd,

And yet God has not said a word!

Compare the ways that intense feelings are presented in *Porphyria's Lover* and one other poem.

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The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listen'd with heart fit to break. 5
When glided in Porphyria; straight
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Porphyria's love: she guess'd not how

Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirr'd,

And yet God has not said a word!

Compare the ways Romantic relationships are presented in *Singh Song* and one other poem.

I run just one ov my daddy's shops
from 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock
and he vunt me not to hav a break
but ven nobody in, I do di lock –

cos up di stairs is my newly bride
vee share in chapatti
vee share in di chutney
after vee hav made luv
like vee rowing through Putney –

5

Ven I return vid my pinnie untied
di shoppers always point and cry:
Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?
Yor lemons are limes
yor bananas are plantain,
dis dirty little floor need a little bit of mop
in di worst Indian shop
on di whole Indian road -

10

15

Above my head high heel tap di ground
as my wife on di web is playing wid di mouse
ven she netting two cat on her Sikh lover site
she book dem for di meat at di cheese ov her price –

20

my bride
she effing at my mum
in all di colours of Punjabi
den stumble like a drunk
making fun at my daddy

my bride
tiny eyes ov a gun
and di tummy ov a teddy

25

my bride
she hav a red crew cut
and she wear a Tartan sari

30

a donkey jacket and some pumps
on di squeak ov di girls dat are pinching my sweeties –

Ven I return from di tickle ov my bride
di shoppers always point and cry:

Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?

35

Di milk is out ov date

and di bread is always stale,

di tings yoo hav on offer yoo hav never got in stock

in di worst Indian shop

on di whole Indian road –

40

Late in di midnight hour

ven yoo shoppers are wrap up quiet

ven di precinct is concrete-cool

vee cum down whispering stairs

and sit on my silver stool,

from behind di chocolate bars

45

vee stare past di half-price window signs

at di beaches ov di UK in di brightey moon –

from di stool each night she say,

How much do yoo charge for dat moon baby?

50

from di stool each night I say,

Is half di cost ov yoo baby,

from di stool each night she say,

How much does dat come to baby?

from di stool each night I say,
Is priceless baby -

55

Compare the ways that content relationships are presented in *Singh Song* and one other poem.

I run just one ov my daddy's shops
from 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock
and he vunt me not to hav a break
but ven nobody in, I do di lock –

cos up di stairs is my newly bride
vee share in chapatti
vee share in di chutney
after vee hav made luv
like vee rowing through Putney –

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Ven I return vid my pinnie untied
di shoppers always point and cry:
Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?
Yor lemons are limes
yor bananas are plantain,
dis dirty little floor need a little bit of mop
in di worst Indian shop
on di whole Indian road -

10

15

Above my head high heel tap di ground
as my vife on di web is playing wid di mouse
ven she netting two cat on her Sikh lover site
she book dem for di meat at di cheese ov her price –

20

my bride
she effing at my mum
in all di colours of Punjabi
den stumble like a drunk
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from di stool each night I say,
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55

Compare the ways that the role of culture in relationships is presented in *Singh Song* and one other poem.

I run just one ov my daddy's shops
from 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock
and he vunt me not to hav a break
but ven nobody in, I do di lock –

cos up di stairs is my newly bride
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from di stool each night I say,
Is half di cost ov yoo baby,

from di stool each night she say,
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from di stool each night I say,
Is priceless baby - 55

Compare the ways relationships with parents are presented in *Mother, Any Distance* and one other poem.

Mother, any distance greater than a single span
requires a second pair of hands.

You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors,
the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors.

You at the zero-end, me with the spool of tape, recording 5
length, reporting metres, centimetres back to base, then leaving
up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling
years between us. Anchor. Kite.

I space-walk through the empty bedrooms, climb
the ladder to the loft, to breaking point, where something 10
has to give;
two floors below your fingertips still pinch
the last one-hundredth of an inch...I reach
towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky
to fall or fly. 15

Compare the ways loss is presented in *When We Two Parted* and one other poem

WHEN we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold, 5
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow— 10
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken, 15
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear? 20
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well:
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met— 25

In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.

If I should meet thee

After long years, 30

How should I greet thee?

With silence and tears.

Compare the ways that changing relationships are presented in *When We Two Parted* and one other poem.

WHEN we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold, 5
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
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They know not I knew thee,
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Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met— 25

In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.

If I should meet thee

After long years, 30

How should I greet thee?

With silence and tears.

Compare the ways that romantic love is portrayed in *Sonnet 29* and one other poem

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood 5
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee 10
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

Compare the ways that independence is presented in *Walking Away* and one other poem.

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –
A sunny day with leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away 5

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be. 10

That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take – the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay. 15

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go. 20

Compare the ways that strong relationships are presented in *Climbing my Grandfather* and one other poem.

I decide to do it free, without a rope or net.

First, the old brogues, dusty and cracked;
an easy scramble onto his trousers,
pushing into the weave, trying to get a grip.

By the overhanging shirt I change 5

direction, traverse along his belt
to an earth-stained hand. The nails
are splintered and give good purchase,
the skin of his finger is smooth and thick

like warm ice. On his arm I discover 10

the glassy ridge of a scar, place my feet
gently in the old stitches and move on.

At his still firm shoulder, I rest for a while
in the shade, not looking down,

for climbing has its dangers, then pull 15

myself up the loose skin of his neck
to a smiling mouth to drink among teeth.

Refreshed, I cross the screed cheek,

to stare into his brown eyes, watch a pupil
slowly open and close. Then up over 20

the forehead, the wrinkles well-spaced
and easy, to his thick hair (soft and white
at this altitude), reaching for the summit,

where gasping for breath I can only lie
watching clouds and birds circle, 25

feeling his heat, knowing
the slow pulse of his good heart.

Compare the ways that parental relationships are presented in *Before You Were Mine* and one other poem.

I'm ten years away from the corner you laugh on
with your pals, Maggie McGeeney and Jean Duff.

The three of you bend from the waist, holding
each other, or your knees, and shriek at the pavement.

Your polka-dot dress blows round your legs. Marilyn.

5

I'm not here yet. The thought of me doesn't occur
in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows
the right walk home could bring. I knew you would dance
like that. Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close
with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it's worth it.

10

The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh?

I remember my hands in those high-heeled red shoes, relics,
and now your ghost clatters toward me over George Square
till I see you, clear as scent, under the tree,

with its lights, and whose small bites on your neck, sweetheart?

15

Cha cha cha! You'd teach me the steps on the way home from Mass,

stamping stars from the wrong pavement. Even then

I wanted the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere
in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts

where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine.

20

Compare the ways memories of relationships are portrayed in *Before You Were Mine* and one other poem.

I'm ten years away from the corner you laugh on
with your pals, Maggie McGeeney and Jean Duff.

The three of you bend from the waist, holding
each other, or your knees, and shriek at the pavement.

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I wanted the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere
in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts

where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine.

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Compare the ways distance in relationships is portrayed in *Winter Swans* and one other poem.

The clouds had given their all –
two days of rain and then a break
in which we walked,

the waterlogged earth
gulping for breath at our feet 5
as we skirted the lake, silent and apart,

until the swans came and stopped us
with a show of tipping in unison.
As if rolling weights down their bodies to their heads 10

they halved themselves in the dark water,
icebergs of white feather, paused before returning again
like boats righting in rough weather.

‘They mate for life’ you said as they left,
porcelain over the stilling water. I didn’t reply 15
but as we moved on through the afternoon light,

slow-stepping in the lake’s shingle and sand,
I noticed our hands, that had, somehow,
swum the distance between us

and folded, one over the other,
like a pair of wings settling after flight 20

Compare the ways that ageing relationships are presented in *Follower* and one other poem.

My father worked with a horse-plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horse strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing 5
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.
The sod rolled over without breaking.
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye 10
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back 15
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
All I ever did was follow
In his broad shadow round the farm. 20

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today

It is my father who keeps stumbling

Behind me, and will not go away.

24

Compare the ways memories are presented in *Neutral Tones* and one other poem.

WE stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,
—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove 5
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro—
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing 10
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing....

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives, 15
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

Compare the ways feelings of loss are presented in *Neutral Tones* and other poem.

WE stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,
—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove 5
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro—
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing 10
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing....

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives, 15
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

Compare the ways the role of nature in relationships is presented in *Love's Philosophy* and one other poem.

THE FOUNTAINS mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single, 5
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle—
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another; 10
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdain'd its brother:
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea—
What are all these kissings worth, 15
If thou kiss not me?

Compare the ways destructive love is portrayed in *The Farmer's Bride* and one other poem.

Three summers since I chose a maid,
Too young maybe—but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human; 5

Like the shut of a winter's day
Her smile went out, and 'twadn't a woman—
More like a little frightened fay.
One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

“Out 'mong the sheep, her be,” they said, 10
'Should properly have been abed;
But sure enough she wadn't there
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.

So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down
We chased her, flying like a hare 15
Before out lanterns. To Church-Town
All in a shiver and a scare
We caught her, fetched her home at last
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house 20
As well as most, but like a mouse:
Happy enough to chat and play
With birds and rabbits and such as they,
So long as men-folk keep away.

“Not near, not near!” her eyes beseech 25

When one of us comes within reach.

The women say that beasts in stall

Look round like children at her call.

I've hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he, 30

Straight and slight as a young larch tree,

Sweet as the first wild violets, she,

To her wild self. But what to me?

The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,

The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky, 35

One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,

A magpie's spotted feathers lie

On the black earth spread white with rime,

The berries redden up to Christmas-time.

What's Christmas-time without there be 40

Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there

Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair

Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,

The soft young down of her, the brown, 45

The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!

Compare the ways that marriage is portrayed in *The Farmer's Bride* and one other poem

Three summers since I chose a maid,
Too young maybe—but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human; 5
Like the shut of a winter's day
Her smile went out, and 'twadn't a woman—
More like a little frightened fay.
One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

“Out 'mong the sheep, her be,” they said, 10
'Should properly have been abed;
But sure enough she wadn't there
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.
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