



Lesson 4

1. Elizabeth Barrett-Browning
Sonnet 43
2. Carol Ann Duffy
Valentine

Learning Outcomes

1. You will be able to explain what each poem is about.
2. You will be able to comment on the structure of each poem
3. You will be able to comment on the themes and ideas in each poem
4. You will be able to explore the ways the poets use language
5. You will begin to make comparisons between the poems



This is a Wordle of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem. What do you think it's about? What do you think the key themes and ideas will be?

A reading of Sonnet 43 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ78X8K3IMw>
- Can you spot the famous voice?

Sum up in one sentence what you think this poem is about.

Imagine you had to give a reading of this poem at a wedding. How would you perform it?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srXCuWFKbwA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv9Jj4HIRh4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvulBcmL5sU>

Which one of these readings best expresses the poem and why?

Structure

Can you work out the rhyme scheme?

- Use P8 of the PDF file. Students to fill in the gaps.
1. How many lines does this poem have?
 2. Which other poem have we studied has the same structure as this poem. What can you remember about this poetic form?
 3. Can you spot the refrain in this poem? A refrain is a line/phrase that is repeated throughout a poem, often at the end of stanzas.
 4. What is the effect of the form and structure of this poem?

Can you create your own poem with
an 'I love thee' refrain?

I love thee and the way thy
is complimented by tomato ketchup



Context

In 1844 Barrett Browning produced a collection entitled simply *Poems*. This volume gained the attention of poet [Robert Browning](#), whose work Elizabeth had praised in one of her poems, and he wrote her a letter.

Elizabeth and Robert, who was six years her junior, exchanged 574 letters over the next twenty months. Immortalized in 1930 in the play *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, by Rudolf Besier (1878-1942), their romance was bitterly opposed by her father, who did not want any of his children to marry. In 1846, the couple eloped and settled in Florence, Italy, where Elizabeth's health improved and she bore a son, Robert Wideman Browning. Her father never spoke to her again. Elizabeth's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, dedicated to her husband and written in secret before her marriage, was published in 1850. Critics generally consider the *Sonnets*—one of the most widely known collections of love lyrics in English—to be her best work. Admirers have compared her imagery to [Shakespeare](#) and her use of the Italian form to [Petrarch](#).

Does this help your understanding of the poem?

Why do you think Barrett Browning wrote this poem?

Ideas and messages

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

I love thee freely, as men strive for right.

I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

1. What is the narrative point of view in this poem?

1st/2nd/3rd?

2. Who do you think the narrator is speaking to?

3. What does the line in red mean?

4. By now you should have realised that Barrett Browning wrote this poem to tell her husband **how** she loved him. How many ways did she love him?

5. What is the idea at the end of the poem?

Imagery

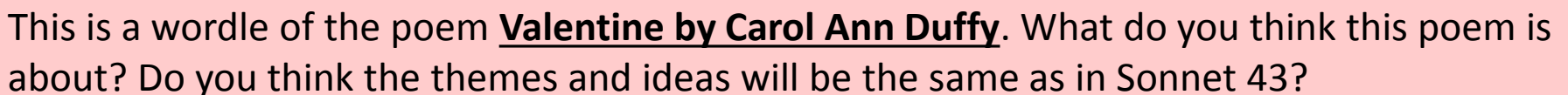
- Look at the images of love in this poem.
1. Give each pair of students in the class responsibility for explaining 1 of the images in the poem. Share ideas with the class.
 2. Read the internet essays. Highlight any points that help you to understand the images further.
 3. Do you agree with all of the points made in the essays?
 4. Write an explanation of 2 of the images.

Agree/Disagree?

1. Browning finds her own question 'How do I love thee?' difficult to answer.
2. There are no boundaries to her love for her husband.
3. The mood and atmosphere of the poem is completely positive.
4. The language of the poem is full of passion and enthusiasm.
5. The images and imagery in the poem are strong and ostentatious.

Learning Outcomes

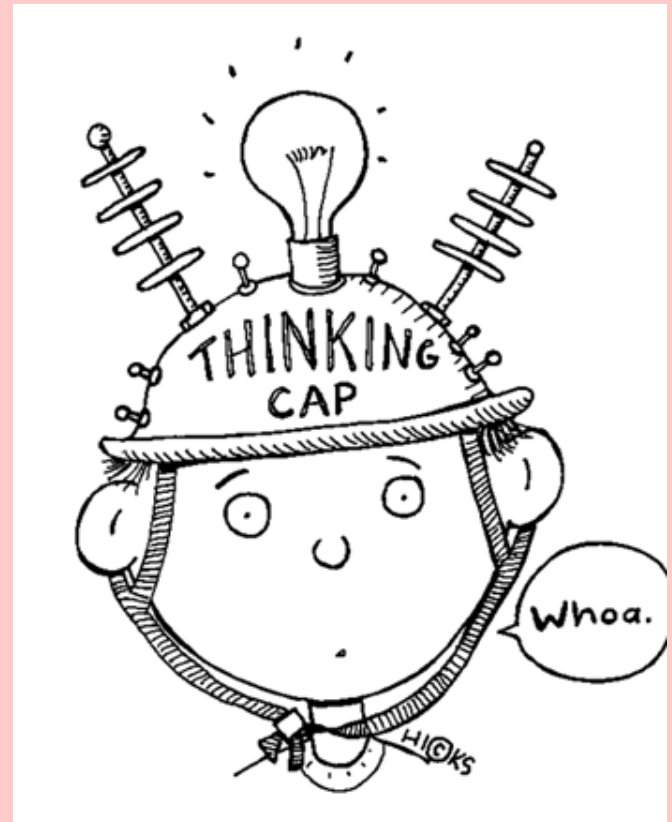
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Learning Outcomes

By the end of the lesson:

You will be able to
interpret images
from the poem.



Read the poem

What is it about?

- What is the unusual valentine's gift given in the poem?
- Which other valentine's gifts are mentioned in the poem?
- Why do you think this poet thinks this is a good Valentine's Day gift?

What is the poem about?

- The poem, on the surface is about giving an unusual present for Valentine's day, but it is really an exploration of love and the nature of relationships between two people.
- It has a single central image which is developed throughout the poem. The onion is an extended metaphor for love!

What will the onion do to you?

Link the images to the poem



Writing about language

- Choose 2 of the images related to the onion and explain how you think these link to love.

Structure - Valentine

- What is the narrative view-point of the poem?
What is the effect of this?
- Which lines stand out in this poem? Why?

Context – what is relevant here?

- **Context**
- Carol Ann Duffy (born 1955) is a Scottish poet, and is currently the UK's first female (and first Scottish) [Poet Laureate](#). Born in Glasgow, she moved with her family to Stafford when she was 7, where she was educated. She wrote poetry from an early age, and was first published at the age of 15. She has since written plays, critical works, and several volumes of poetry.
- Her poetry has been the subject of controversy. **She follows in the poetic tradition of, for example, Robert Browning, in writing monologues from the point of view of disturbed characters.** Her poem *Education for Leisure* caused a huge debate when an exam board decided to withdraw it from an exam syllabus because of a complaint about its contents. Duffy often tackles difficult subjects, encouraging the reader to explore alternative points of view.
- **Duffy's poetry is often feminist in its themes and approach.** Her collection *The World's Wife* took characters from history, literature and mythology and gave them a female point of view, as a sister, a wife or a feminised version of a character.

What are the themes and ideas about love in this poem?

- Love is....
- Love is not...
- Love is...

Same or different?

Valentine & Sonnet 43

Same

Different

3-2-1

3 images used in the poems	2 ideas about love	1 – the one you liked best and why

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