

Puspa Shrestha

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Robert Burns

Before Reading

Answer these questions.

- How do people express love?
- What is the symbolic meaning of 'rose'?
- What images in nature would you use to express love?

Robert Burns (1759-1796) was a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is considered the national poet of Scotland and a central figure in Scottish literature. His father was a tenant farmer, and Burns worked as a plowboy. He grew up poor but well-read and began writing poetry in Scottish dialect. As an adult, he was as unsuccessful as his father in making a living at farming.



In 1791, however, he quit farming for good and moved his family to the nearby town of Dumfries. Never in good health, on the morning of July 21, 1796, he died in Dumfries at the age of 37. He is best known as a pioneer of the Romantic Movement for his lyrical poetry.

The poem '*A Red, Red Rose*' is a lyrical ballad that describes the speaker's deep love for his beloved and promises that this love will last longer than human life. The beloved of the speaker is as beautiful as the red rose and as sweet as the music. With the help of the literary devices, the poet has sketched a very vivid and realistic picture of his profound love.

Reading

O, my love is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June.
O, my love is like the melody,
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonny lass,
So deep in love am I,
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun!
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only love,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!



Glossary

a' (det.): short form of the word 'all'

art (v.): an older form of the word 'are'

bonny (adj.): attractive, beautiful

gang (v.): 'go' in Scottish

lass (n.): a girl or young woman

o' (prep.): short form of the word 'of'

weel (adj.): an older form of the word 'well'

thee (pro.): an older form of the word 'you'

tho' (conj.): though

thou (pro.): an older form of the word 'you'

wi' (prep.): short form of the word 'with'

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

- To which two things does the speaker compare his love in the first stanza?
- What does the speaker promise in the second and third stanzas?

- c. What imagery does he use in his promise, and why do you think he uses such language?
- d. In the last stanza, what event is about to happen by mentioning the number of miles?
- e. Which image in the poem do you find the most memorable or surprising and why?

Reference to the context

- a. What can you infer about the speaker's devotion to his beloved from the following lines?
*And I will come again, my love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!*
- b. What is the theme of the poem?
- c. Paraphrase the whole poem into simple prose form.
- d. Literary devices are tools that enable the writers to present their ideas, emotions, and feelings and also help the readers understand those more profound meanings. Analyse the poem in terms of the literary devices such as simile, symbolism, imagery, alliteration, and assonance.
- e. What is hyperbole? Explain its purpose citing examples of hyperbole used in the poem.
- f. What is refrain? Why is it used in the poem? Explain citing an example from the poem.

Reference beyond the text

- a. What kind of love is expressed in "A Red, Red Rose"?
- b. Do you think that love has power? Why do the poets compose poems addressing their beloved?
- c. Poetry is the expression of feeling and emotions. Explain.