

William Shakespeare - Sonnet 130

My mistress eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go –
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Coral – a hard red, pink or white substance on the sea bed

Dun – dull-grayish brown, dark

Damasked – originally brought from Damascus, of special sort

To reek – to smell unpleasant, to emit a smell

Hath – has

To grant – to admit

To belie – to show that something is wrong, not true

Are you surprised by Shakespeare's description of his mistress? What can you find about her? Is she very beautiful? What are her eyes, lips, breasts like? Describe her hair. Does her breath smell nice? How musical is her voice? Does she walk like a goddess? How dear is she to him? Explain the latest two lines. Do we know what makes this woman so attractive?

Emily Dickinson - How happy is the little stone

How happy is the little Stone
That rambles in the Road alone,
And doesn't care about Careers
And Exigencies never fears –
Whose Coat of elemental Brown
A passing Universe put on,
And independent as the Sun
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute Decree
In casual simplicity –

to ramble – to walk for pleasure, especially in the countryside

exigency – a difficulty, demand

decree – a predetermined mission, an imposed law

absolute – above everything, cosmic

How do you like the poem? How modern does it sound to you? What is the stone like? Find the words in the poem that support your opinion. Which do you think are the »happy« words in the poem? How do you imagine a passing Universe? How do you think the poet feels?

Robert Frost - Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if I had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Hold with – agree with, approve of

Perish – die, come to an end

Suffice – do, be enough to achieve a purpose

What do the words fire and ice stand for in the poem? Do people agree about the »greatness« of fire and ice? What about the poet? Is hate something he has »tasted« or is it something he has learned to live with? What makes you think so? What do you think the poem is about?

Robert Frost - Stopping by Woods on a snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Queer – strange, unusual

Harness – all the leather-work and metal-work by which a horse is controlled and fastened to the cart

Downy – filled or covered with soft and very fine feathers or hairs

Flake – a thin piece of something that has broken off a larger piece

Who is the speaker? What is he attracted by? Is he alone? Where does he stop? Why does his horse immediately respond? What can be heard? What decision does he make, if any? Think about the man's reasons for stopping, and his reasons for having to go on.

William Wordsworth - I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

O'er - over

Vale - valley (a literary word)

Host - a host of things is a lot of them

Flutter - move up and down or from side to side with a lot of quick, light movements

Margin - the margin of a place or area is the extreme edge of it

Bay - a part of a coastline where the land curves inward

Toss - if you toss your head, you move it backwards quickly or suddenly

Sprightly - lively and active

Out-do - be more successful than somebody else in a particular activity

Glee - a feeling of happiness, delight or excitement

Gay - lively and cheerful (an old-fashioned use)

Jocund - merry, cheerful

Oft - often

Vacant - empty

Pensive - thoughtful, thinking deeply about something

Bliss - a state of complete happiness

Which of the following words are the most/least appropriate to describe the poet's feelings towards nature: admiration, surprise, guilt, fear, regret, amazement, embarrassment, joy, envy? Mark the lines in the poem which describe the poet. Then concentrate in the lines which describe the daffodils. What image do you have of the poet? What about the daffodils? Choose five verbs which refer to the poet, and five verbs which refer to the daffodils. Now

compare the effect of the verbs that indicate the movement of the daffodils and the waves with the effect of those that indicate the movement of the poet.