

Name: _____

Class: _____

what love isn't

By Yrsa Daley-Ward

2014

Yrsa Daley-Ward is a spoken word poet, self-published author, and actress of Jamaican and Nigerian heritage. In this poem, Ward uses figurative language to explore what love is and is not. As you read, take note of how the poet uses figurative language to describe love and the effect it has on the overall theme.

- [1] It is not a five star stay. It is not compliments and it is never ever flattery.
It is solid. Not sweet but always nutritious
- [5] always herb, always salt. Sometimes grit.¹
It is now and till the end. It is never a slither, never a little
- [10] it is a full serving
it is much
too much and real
never pretty or clean. It stinks — you can smell it coming
- [15] it is weight
it is weight and it is too heavy to feel good sometimes. It is discomfort — it is not what the films say. Only songs get it right
- [20] it is irregular
it is difficult
and always, always surprising.



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1. a hard, sharp granule

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the central theme of the poem?
 - A. Love causes more problems than it is worth.
 - B. Love is a disaster when it is not perfect.
 - C. Love can be difficult in unexpected ways.
 - D. Love is not as difficult as media portrays it.

2. PART B: Which section from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Not sweet but always / nutritious / always herb, always salt." (Lines 3-6)
 - B. "never pretty or clean. It stinks — you can / smell it coming" (Lines 13-14)
 - C. "it is / not what the films say. Only songs / get it right" (Lines 17-19)
 - D. "it is irregular / it is difficult / and always, always / surprising." (Lines 20-23)

3. PART A: Which of the following identifies the tone of the poem?
 - A. honest
 - B. pessimistic
 - C. mournful
 - D. affectionate

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "always herb, always salt." (Line 6)
 - B. "It is now and till the end. It is never a / slither" (Lines 8-9)
 - C. "It is discomfort — it is / not what the films say." (Lines 17-18)
 - D. "Only songs / get it right" (Lines 18-19)

5. How does the poet's reference to the portrayal of love in films and songs contribute to the poem's meaning (Lines 17-19)?
