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THE POETRY OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE AND SIR WALTER RALEIGH



Christopher Marlowe



Sir Walter Ralieg

In this unit you will be reading poetry from the Renaissance Period. The Renaissance is the movement in which the leaders of thought portrayed the “complete” man - a man who is both courtly and earned. In addition there was a desire to recover and imitate the best of classical Greek and Roman writing. A new emphasis was placed on the importance of the individual.

The first literary work from that period you will be reading is the poem, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” by Christopher Marlowe. This poem is a pastoral poem, a poem that expresses peace and the simplicity of life.

Before you read there are some vocabulary words to define.

Now let’s read the poem.



The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Come live with me and be my Love,
 And we will all the pleasures prove,
 That hills and valleys, dales and field,
 Or woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks
 And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
 By shallow rivers, to whose falls
 Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
 And a thousand fragrant posies,
 A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
 Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool,
 Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
 Fair lined slippers for the cold,
 With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds
 With coral clasps and amber studs:
 And if these pleasures may thee move,
 Come live with me and be my Love.

Thy silver dishes for thy meat
 As precious as the gods do eat,
 Shall on an ivory table be
 Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
 For thy delight each May-morning:
 If these delights thy mind may move,
 Then live with me and be my Love.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

See the following website for additional information about Christopher Marlowe:

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/marlowe.htm>

Setting

Christopher Marlowe sets the poem in early spring in a rural locale (presumably in England) where shepherds tend their flocks. The use of the word madrigals (Line 8)—referring to poems set to music and sung by two to six voices with a single melody or interweaving melodies—suggests that the time is the 16th Century, when madrigals were highly popular in England and elsewhere in Europe. However, the poem could be about any shepherd of any age in any country, for such is the universality of its theme.

Characters

The Passionate Shepherd: He importunes a woman—presumably a young and pretty country girl—to become his sweetheart and enjoy with him all the pleasures that nature has to offer.

The Shepherd’s Love: The young woman who receives the Passionate Shepherd’s message.

Swains: Young country fellows whom the Passionate Shepherd promises will dance for his love.

Type of Work

“The Passionate Shepherd” is a pastoral poem. Pastoral poems generally center on the love of a shepherd for a maiden (as in Marlowe’s poem), on the death of a friend, or on the quiet simplicity of rural life. The writer of a pastoral poem may be an educated city dweller, like Marlowe, who extolls the virtues of a shepherd girl or longs for the peace and quiet of the country. *Pastoral* is derived from the Latin word *pastor*, meaning *shepherd*.

Theme

The theme of “The Passionate Shepherd” is the rapture of springtime love in a simple, rural setting. Implicit in this theme is the motif of *carpe diem*—Latin for “seize the day.” *Carpe diem* urges people to enjoy the moment without worrying about the future.

Writing and Publication Information

Marlowe wrote the poem in 1588 or 1589 while attending Cambridge University at its Corpus Christi College. It first appeared in print in poetry collections published in 1599 and 1600.

Rhyme and Meter

In each stanza, the first line rhymes with the second, and the third rhymes with the fourth. The meter is [iambic tetrameter](#), with eight syllables (four iambic feet) per line. (An iambic foot consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.) The following graphic presentation illustrates the rhyme scheme and meter of Stanza 1:

Come **LIVE**.|.with **ME**.|.and **BE**.|.my **LOVE**,
 And **WE**.|.will **ALL**.|.the **PLEA**.|.sures **PROVE**
 That **HILLS**.|.and **VALL**.|.eys, **DALE**.|.and **FIELD**,
 And **ALL**.|.the **CRAG**.|.gy **MOUNT**.|.ains **YIELD**.

The Poem's Enduring Appeal

Over the centuries, Marlowe's little poem has enjoyed widespread popularity because it captures the joy of simple, uncomplicated love. The shepherd does not worry whether his status makes him acceptable to the girl; nor does he appear concerned about money or education. The future will take care of itself. What matters is the moment. So, he says, let us enjoy it—sitting on a rock listening to the birds.

The poem by Marlowe caused other authors to write responses. One of these responses entitled “The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd” was written by Sir Walter Raleigh.

Let's read the reply.

The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

If all the world and love were young,
 And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
 These pretty pleasures might me move
 To live with thee and be thy Love.

But Time drives flocks from field to fold;
 When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;
 And Philomel becometh dumb;
 The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
 To wayward Winter reckoning yields:
 A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
 Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
 Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
 Soon break, soon wither--soon forgotten,
 In folly ripe, in season rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy-buds,
 Thy coral clasps and amber studs,--

All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy Love.

But could youth last, and love still breed,
Had joys no date, nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy Love.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552?-1618)

The complete title to this poem is “The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd.”

[Sir Walter Raliegh](#)

A look at the two poems side by side:

<p style="text-align: center;">The Passionate Shepherd to His Love by Christopher Marlowe 1599</p> <p>Come live with me and be my love, And we will all the pleasures prove That valleys, groves, hills, and fields Woods or steepy mountain yields And we will sit upon the rocks, Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks By shallow rivers to whose falls Melodious birds sing madrigals. And I will make thee beds of roses And a thousand fragrant posies, A cap of flower, and a kirtle Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle; A gown made of the finest wool Which from our pretty lambs we pull; Fair lined slippers for the cold With buckles of the purest gold; A belt of straw and ivy buds, With coral clasps and amber studs; And if these pleasures may thee move, Come live with me and be my love. The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing For thy delight each May morning: If these delights thy mind may move, Then live with me and be my love.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd by Sir Walter Raleigh 1600</p> <p>If all the world and love were young, And truth in every shepherd's tongue, These pretty pleasures might me move To live with thee and be thy love. Time drives the flocks from field to fold, When rivers rage and rocks grow cold; And Philomel becometh dumb; The rest complain of cares to come. The flowers do fade, and wanton fields To wayward winter reckoning yields; A honey tongue, a heart of gall, Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall. Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy bed of roses, Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies, Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten, In folly ripe, in reason rotten. Thy belt of straw and ivy buds, Thy coral clasps and amber studs, All these in me no means can move To come to thee and be thy love. But could youth last and love still breed, Had joys no date nor age no need, Then these delights my mind might move To live with thee and be thy love.</p>
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Now answer questions 1 - 10