

## The Influence of Romanticism



**READING 2A** Compare and contrast works of literature that express a universal theme. **3** Evaluate the changes in figurative language in poetry across literary time periods.

### Sonnet 43

Poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

### Remembrance

Poem by Emily Brontë

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML12-952A

#### Meet the Authors

### Elizabeth Barrett Browning

1806–1861



Born into a family involved in the Jamaican sugar trade, Elizabeth Barrett enjoyed a privileged childhood in Herefordshire, England. As a schoolgirl, she was precocious, reading several of Shakespeare's plays before she was 10 and publishing her first "epic" poem at 12. "I used to make up rhymes over my bread and milk when I was nearly a baby," she later recalled.

**Kindred Spirits** At 15, Barrett suffered an ailment that left her an invalid. Despite her condition, she continued to read voraciously and to write poetry, publishing three volumes between 1826 and 1844. Moved by a poem she wrote

praising his verse, Robert Browning initiated a correspondence with her that led to their falling in love. During their courtship, Barrett secretly wrote a group of sonnets, including "Sonnet 43," about her passionate love for Robert, but she did not show them to him until after they were married. Published as *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), these lyrics are generally considered to be her finest work.

**Active Years** During the 15 years of her marriage, Barrett Browning gave birth to a son, wrote political poetry, and championed such causes as the abolition of slavery, the reform of child labor practices, and women's rights.

### Emily Brontë

1818–1848



One of six children, Emily Brontë grew up on the wild, lonely moors of Yorkshire. She and her sisters Charlotte and Anne and her brother, Branwell, were inseparable companions. Often left to themselves, they began writing long, intricate stories about an imaginary world inhabited by heroic characters. Around 1833, Emily and Anne broke off from their siblings and invented their own kingdom, Gondal, the setting of many poems and stories of adventure.

**First Book** In 1845, Charlotte discovered a group of Emily's "Gondal poems." Stirred by their "wild, melancholy, and

elevating" music, she convinced Emily and Anne to combine their poems with hers in one volume. The book appeared under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell and included "Remembrance," the Gondal heroine's elegy for the dead hero.

**Romantic Genius** In 1847, Emily published *Wuthering Heights*, a highly imaginative novel that disturbed and bewildered critics. This fierce, brooding story of star-crossed love and revenge eventually came to be considered one of England's finest novels.

Authors  
Online



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## LITERARY ANALYSIS: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

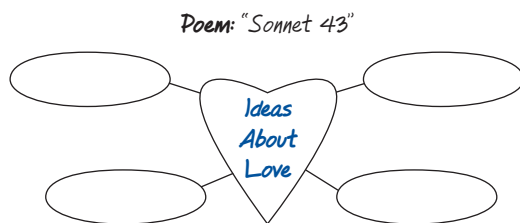
Much of the power of poetry comes from **figurative language**—language that communicates ideas beyond the literal meaning of the words. The most common figures of speech are **similes** (comparisons using *like* or *as*, such as *My love is like to ice*) and **metaphors** (direct comparisons that do not use *like* or *as*, such as *the flame of love*). Other figures of speech include

- **Personification**—the giving of human qualities to an object, animal, or idea (*Love's not Time's fool*)
- **Hyperbole**—exaggeration for emphasis or comic effect (*I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold*)

Figurative language allows a poet to describe abstract concepts or to present familiar things in a fresh way. In the preceding examples, the personification suggests that love does not change with the passage of time, and the hyperbole suggests the high value the speaker places on being loved. As you read the following two poems, notice different types of figurative language and the ideas about love communicated through this language.

## READING SKILL: COMPARE THEMES

The **theme** of a poem is the underlying message about life or human nature that the writer wants readers to understand. The two poems you will read share a subject—love—but communicate different ideas about this subject. As you read each poem, examine direct statements and figurative language to determine the ideas about love that the poet conveys. Use a web diagram like the one shown for each poem.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

## Do you believe that LOVE lasts forever?

Do you believe in love everlasting, or that love must inevitably come to an end? What are some pressures of daily life that may pose challenges to the strength and permanence of romantic love? The poems that follow describe their speakers' conceptions about eternal love. Do you agree or disagree with each speaker's viewpoint about love that lasts forever?

**REPRESENT** To see how you feel about love, use the four scales below. Think about the kind of love relationship you desire or think is best to have. For each pair of opposite qualities, decide which point on the scale reflects your beliefs about what love should be. Be prepared to compare your own attitudes with those of the speakers in the poems.

**Love Scales**

<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Idealistic	Realistic
<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Eternal	Impermanent
<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Exclusive	Wide-ranging
<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Passionate	Tranquil



# SONNET 43

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

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 **A**  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
5 I love thee to the level of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
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  
10 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. **B**

**A FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

Identify the type of figurative language used in lines 2–3. What idea about love does it communicate?

**B COMPARE THEMES**

What belief about love is expressed in line 14?



My dear the heart<sup>1<sup>st</sup></sup> which you behold



With breaks when you the same unfold  
2<sup>nd</sup>

4<sup>th</sup>  
Sure wounded is and breaks in twain

Even so my heart with love as if I had  
3<sup>rd</sup>





# REMEMBRANCE

Emily Brontë

Cold in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee!  
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!  
Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,  
Severed at last by Time's all-wearing wave? **C**

5 Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover  
Over the mountains, on that northern shore;  
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover  
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth, and fifteen wild Decembers  
10 From those brown hills have melted into spring—  
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers  
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee  
While the World's tide is bearing me along:  
15 Other desires and other hopes beset me,  
Hopes which obscure but cannot do thee wrong.

No later light has lightened up my heaven,  
No second morn has ever shone for me:  
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given—  
20 All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee. **D**

But when the days of golden dreams had perished  
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,  
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,  
Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy;

## **C FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

State what time is compared to in the **metaphor** in line 4. According to the speaker, how does time affect love?

## **Language Coach**

**Roots and Affixes** The prefix *be-* can mean “around” (*besiege*) or “make” (*belittle*), among other things. Which of these meanings makes more sense for *beset* (line 15)? What do you think *beset* means?

## **D COMPARE THEMES**

Reread lines 13–20. Does the speaker love as intensely as the speaker in the previous poem?

25 Then did I check the tears of useless passion,  
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;  
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten  
Down to that tomb already more than mine!

And even yet, I dare not let it languish,  
30 Dare not indulge in Memory's rapturous pain;  
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,  
How could I seek the empty world again? **E**

**E COMPARE THEMES**

What do lines 29–32 suggest about the speaker's feelings for her beloved?





**LETTER** Robert Browning wrote this letter to his future wife before he met her in person. He describes how reading her poetry affected him.

### *Letter to Elizabeth Barrett*

January 10, 1845

I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett—and this is no offhand complimentary letter that I shall write—whatever else, no prompt matter-of-course recognition of your genius, and there a graceful and natural end of the thing. Since the day last week when I first read your poems, I quite laugh to remember how I have been turning and turning again in my mind what I should be able to tell you of their effect upon me, for in the first flush of delight I thought I would this once get out of my habit of purely passive enjoyment, when I do really enjoy, and thoroughly justify my admiration—perhaps even, as a loyal fellow craftsman should, try and find fault and do you some little good to be proud of hereafter! But nothing comes of it all—so into me has it gone, and part of me has it become, this great living poetry of yours, not a flower of which but took root and grew—Oh, how different that is from lying to be dried and pressed flat, and prized highly, and put in a book with a proper account at top and bottom, and shut up and put away . . . and the book called a “Flora,” besides! After all, I need not give up the thought of doing that, too, in time; because even now, talking with whoever is worthy, I can give a reason for my faith in one and another excellence, the fresh strange music, the affluent language, the exquisite pathos and true new brave thought; but in this addressing myself to you—your own self, and for the first time, my feeling rises altogether. I do, as I say, love these books with all my heart—and I love you too. Do you know I was once not very far from seeing—really seeing you? Mr. Kenyon said to me one morning “Would you like to see Miss Barrett?” then he went to announce me—then he returned . . . you were too unwell, and now it is years ago, and I feel as at some untoward passage in my travels, as if I had been close, so close, to some world’s-wonder in chapel or crypt, only a screen to push and I might have entered, but there was some slight, so it now seems, slight and just sufficient bar to admission, and the half-opened door shut, and I went home my thousands of miles, and the sight was never to be?

Well, these poems were to be, and this true thankful joy and pride with which I feel myself,

Yours ever faithfully,  
Robert Browning

## Comprehension

- Recall** What question does the speaker of “Sonnet 43” pose and answer?
- Paraphrase** Describe three of the ways in which the speaker loves her husband in “Sonnet 43.”
- Clarify** What question does the speaker of “Remembrance” ask in lines 1–8?
- Clarify** In lines 29–32, why does the speaker avoid remembering?



**READING 2A** Compare and contrast works of literature that express a universal theme. **3** Evaluate the changes in figurative language in poetry across literary time periods.

## Literary Analysis

- Analyze Figurative Language** Find one example each of **simile**, **metaphor**, **personification**, and **hyperbole** in these poems. What ideas are communicated through these figures of speech? Use the following chart to plan your answer.

<i>Figurative Language</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Ideas Communicated</i>
<i>simile</i>		
<i>metaphor</i>		
<i>personification</i>		
<i>hyperbole</i>		

- Compare Themes** Use the web diagrams you completed for the poems to compare their themes. What are the ideas about love conveyed in “Sonnet 43”? Are the same ideas conveyed in “Remembrance”? Support your response.
- Compare Texts** In “Letter to Elizabeth Barrett” (page 958), Robert Browning claims that her poetry “took root and grew” in him, and he praises “one and another excellence, the fresh strange music, the affluent language, the exquisite pathos and true new brave thought.” Which of these qualities do you find in “Sonnet 43”? What other qualities do you find in the poem?

## Literary Criticism

- Different Perspectives** In writing about Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s sonnets, the critic Beverly Taylor praised the poet for breaking “with the conventions of the Renaissance sonnet by making the speaker and lover a woman.” Reread the sonnets by Shakespeare, Spenser, and Petrarch in Unit 2. In what other ways, stylistically and thematically, does “Sonnet 43” differ from these sonnets? Cite specific examples.

*Do you believe that **LOVE** lasts forever?*

Should people strive to love as the speakers in the poem do or not? What are the advantages and disadvantages of loving with such intensity?