



LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



Context – *Love's Philosophy* was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley and was published in 1819.

Percy Bysshe Shelley – Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was one of the major English Romantic Poets. Shelley was not particularly famous in his lifetime, but his popularity grew steadily after his death. Shelley was involved in a close circle of poets and writers, for example his second wife Mary Shelley (the author of *Frankenstein*) and Lord Byron. His poems have influenced a number of social and political movements since, particularly his theories on non-violence in protest and political action.



Romanticism – Romanticism (in literature) was a literary movement that originated in Europe in the latter half of the 18th Century. In most areas it peaked in the early 19th Century. Romanticism is characterised by its emphasis on emotions, as well as glorifying nature and past events – memories and settings are often colourfully described. It was partially in response to the scientific rationalisation of nature of the era. Shelley is considered as one of the foremost Romantic poets.



Shelley's Love Life – The themes of love, union, and disappointment that dominate the poem are mirrored in elements of Shelley's love life. In young adulthood, Shelley eloped to Scotland with a 16 year old. They married and had two children, yet soon separated. Shelley then married Mary, the daughter of a friend – only weeks after his first wife drowned herself. Two of their children died, and Mary suffered a nervous breakdown. His love life sure was eventful!



Romanticism in Shelley's Life – Shelley's own life mirrors Romanticism in both its extreme moments of ecstasy and its deep, brooding despair. In his eventful (yet short) life, Shelley rebelled against authority, in the pursuit of ideal love (see left). He experienced two marriages and the deaths of his first wife and two of his children. He travelled widely, in pursuit of freedom and in perpetual awe of nature. His life ended aged only 29, when his boat capsized and he drowned.



Language/Structural Devices

Personification– Shelley uses personification as his predominant tool for demonstrating the companionship and interconnectedness of nature. For example, in the first stanza alone, Shelley personifies rivers, oceans, mountains, waves and heavens. The personification merges the boundary between the natural world and the emotional word; features of nature seem capable of tenderness and unity in much the same way as people are.

Imagery – In keeping with the romantic tradition, Shelley creates powerful and vivid imagery, particularly with regards to the natural world. For example, Shelley uses precise and varied nouns alongside imaginative verbs, to depict the appearance and mannerisms of nature, e.g. 'fountains mingle', 'sunlight clasps', and 'moonbeams kiss.' Through this varied vocabulary, the reader is given clear imagery regarding how nature moves and behaves.

Quote: "See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;"

Quote: "The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,"

Metaphors – Metaphors used throughout the poem to exemplify and enhance meanings. Principally these compare ideas in the natural world to romantic love. For example, in stanza 2, the speaker compares the 'disdained...brother' of a 'sister flower' to the speaker's feelings of unrequited love for the person to whom the poem is addressed.

Rhetorical Questions – To end each stanza, the speaker directly addresses their love interest, lamenting why they are not together. To persuade the her to reconsider, the speaker uses rhetorical questions. The break enforced by the stanza endings affords further time for the recipient to think deeply about the points raised by these questions.

Quote: "No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother"

Quote: "In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?"

Form – The poem is conventional in the sense that each stanza is eight lines long, with two stanzas in total. Rhyme is used throughout to create an ABABCD CD rhyme scheme. The rhyme helps to create a fairly consistent rhythm throughout most of the poem, besides the acceleration created by the repetition of 'and' at the end of stanza 2.

Structure – Both stanzas begin with the speaker drawing the object of his affection's attention towards the connections between different aspects of nature. Several examples of entwined nature are given in both stanzas, before in the final two lines the speaker aims to relate this philosophy to him and her – if nature follows these laws, then why don't we?

Quote: "And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:"

Quote: "What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?"

Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

Romantic Love – The predominant idea across the poem is that the speaker is intensely in love, and desires acceptance of his advances. Whilst he uses fanciful language and playful analogies in attempting to secure her heart, the speaker does directly put the question of love to the object of his affection twice, ending each stanza.




Nature – The ideas of romantic love, union, and inter-connectedness are all beautifully represented through elements of nature. For example, Shelley draws on the connections between different bodies of water, the 'kiss' between the peaks of mountains and the sky, and the way in which waves 'clasp' one another.



Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	The fountains mingle with the river	Lines 1-2: The speaker begins his explanation on the <u>philosophy of love</u> , by detailing how different parts of nature are <u>intertwined</u> . He commences with a description of how <u>water bodies mingle</u> .
	2	And the rivers with the ocean,	
	3	The winds of heaven mix for ever	Lines 3-4: One of the core ideas of romanticism, the tie between the <u>natural and emotional world</u> , is explored; the 'winds of heaven' are <u>personified</u> as being in a perpetually joyous state. This creates a mood of <u>tranquility and peace</u> – the speaker's utopian view of the natural world becomes clear.
	4	With a sweet emotion;	
	5	Nothing in the world is single;	Lines 5-6: The speaker then begins to summarise the <u>key message</u> behind the opening four lines – in the natural world, everything is <u>intertwined</u> . The laws of nature dictate that nothing should be alone. The word ' <u>divine</u> ' implies that this comes from a form of <u>higher power</u> – it is meant to be.
	6	All things by a law divine	
	7	In one spirit meet and mingle.	Lines 7-8: The <u>message</u> continues to be relayed by the speaker, who now asks – if everything in <u>interlinked</u> , than why not you and I? The line completes the ABABCD CD rhyme scheme. The <u>ordered rhyme scheme</u> reflects the message of <u>natural order</u> that the speaker is communicating.
	8	Why not I with thine?—	
2	9	See the mountains kiss high heaven	Lines 9-10: Shelley adopts personification once more, as he states that the mountains ' <u>kiss high heaven</u> ,' portraying their sheer height (and thus the magnitude of nature) which is <u>juxtaposed</u> with the tender idea of a kiss – <u>vocabulary associated with embrace</u> is also utilised in 'clasp' in line 10.
	10	And the waves clasp one another;	
	11	No sister-flower would be forgiven	Lines 11-12: The most direct instance of a <u>metaphor</u> between nature and the speaker's love is used. The idea is raised that flowers <u>cannot grow without support</u> (soil, etc.) – just as she <u>will never bloom without him</u> . The word ' <u>disdained</u> ' suggests <u>unrequited love</u> ; she is not with him by choice.
	12	If it disdained its brother;	
	13	And the sunlight clasps the earth	Lines 13-14: The <u>pace</u> of the poem accelerates, due to the <u>lack of punctuation</u> and the repeated use of ' <u>And</u> ' – perhaps mirroring his <u>increasing desperation</u> . Once more <u>personification</u> is used, as ' <u>kiss</u> ' and ' <u>clasp</u> ' are repeated – these ideas appear to be now dominating his thoughts.
	14	And the moonbeams kiss the sea:	
	15	What is all this sweet work worth	Lines 15-16: The poem <u>ends</u> by returning to the question of his love <u>accepting his advances</u> (similar to the end of stanza 1). This <u>rhetorical question</u> , however, is perhaps even heavier, as he seems to question the point of all of nature's efforts (and perhaps life) if she won't embrace him.
	16	If thou kiss not me?	

Poems for Comparison

Poems for Comparison		Influences on the Poet
Sonnet 29	<i>Love's Philosophy</i> can be contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>Romantic Love</u>	<p>Shelley met Harriet Westbrook, who probably was his inferior intellectually – but she was madly in love with him. Shelley was flattered and entered a relationship with Harriet... But as she was disgraced by her parents for being associated with an atheist and a rebel, he was provoked into marrying her. He was nineteen and she sixteen; and entering a marriage on such premises would, not surprisingly, prove to be a mistake. He and Harriet had two children together, but their marriage was withering, and when he, in 1814, met 17-year-old Mary Wollstonecraft Goodwin, he was lost; their mutual attraction was electric. They eloped to Switzerland for the summer, and when they came back, Harriet drowned herself in Hyde Park in London. Percy Bysshe Shelley – A Romantic Rebel – www.ndia.no</p> 
Neutral Tones	<i>Love's Philosophy</i> can be compared with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>Nature</u> .	