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.

Shelley’s Love Life — The themes of love, union, and disunion that dominate the poem are mirrored in elements of Shelley’s love life. In young adulthood, Shelley eloped to Scotland with a woman he had seen in a很差的 unhappiness. 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 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 companionhip 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 world; features of nature are given human tendencies 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 claps’, and ‘moonbeams kiss’. Through this varied vocabulary, the reader is given clear imagery regarding how nature moves and behaves.

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 himself to a 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 the object of his affection, ‘Why not I with thine?’ The break enforced by the stanza endings affords further time for the speaker to think deeply about the points raised by these questions.

**Form** — The poem is conventional in the sense that each stanza is eight lines long, with two stanzas in total. Rhyme is used throughout, with the ABABCDCD rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme 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 you?

**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 union and entwined 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.

Poems for Comparison

Sonnet 29

**Love’s Philosophy** can be contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of Romantic Love.

Influences on the Poet

Shelley met Harriet Westbrook, who provided him with affection and intellectually — she was really in love with him. Shelley was flirted with and entered a relationship with Harriet. But his parents for being associated with an atheist and a rebel, he was provoked into marrying her. He was estranged and the family entered a marriage on such premises would, not surprisingly, prove to be a accident. He and Harriet had two children together, but their marriage was nothing but. Harriet’s death was suffering, and when she was 24, in 1817, with their two children. Harriet drowned herself in Hyde Park in London Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Romantic Rebel — retelling

Neutral Tones

Love’s Philosophy can be compared with this poem in relation to the theme of Nature.