

FOR ANNE GREGORY

Explanation of the Poem:

Stanza 1

"Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-colored
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

Explanation: The speaker tells Anne that her beautiful honey-colored hair can make guys fall in love, but it's more about her looks than who she is inside. The hair acts like a barrier, preventing anyone from seeing her true self. In the end, no one seems to love Anne for who she really is.

Stanza 2

"But I can get a hair dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair."

Explanation: Anne suggests dyeing her hair to show that external appearances are changeable and not as important as inner qualities, hoping men will appreciate her for who she is inside.

Stanza 3

"I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

Explanation: Anne responds, suggesting she can dye her hair brown, black, or carrot-colored. She thinks this change will make men appreciate her inner beauty rather than being attracted solely to her outward appearance. Anne wants to emphasize that external features are artificial, changeable, and not as important or genuine as one's inner self.

Extract Based Questions:

1. Never shall a young man, Thrown into despair
By those great honey-coloured Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone And not your yellow hair."

(a) What does 'ramparts' mean?

(b) What is the colour of Anne's hair?

(c) What does the poet mean by, "love you for yourself alone and not your yellow hair"?

(d) What does 'despair' mean in the stanza?

Answer: (a) Ramparts refers to wall that protects a fort. Here, it has been used metaphorically to mean the lock of hair around her ear.

(b) Anne's hair are honey-coloured.

(c) The poet means that young men love Anne for her beautiful looks and not for her real character.

(d) Despair means hopelessness.

2. "I heard an old religious man But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone And not your yellow hair."

(a) Who had found a 'text'?

(b) What does the text prove?

(c) What does 'yesternight' mean?

(d) Find a word from the passage which is an antonym of 'conceal or hide'.

Answer: (a) An old religious man had found a text.

(b) The text proves that only God is capable of looking beyond external beauty, into the soul of a person.

(c) Yesternight means last night.

(d) The antonym is 'declare'

Top 10 PYQs:

Short Answer Questions (40-50 words each)

1. How does the speaker feel in the first part of the poem, and what worries them about how others might see them?

Answer: The speaker is engulfed in a sense of deep sadness and despair in the initial part of the poem. Their primary concern revolves around the fear that others might only appreciate their outward appearance, particularly their striking yellow hair, without truly understanding or valuing their inner self. This fear reflects a common human apprehension about being superficially judged based on physical attributes rather than genuine qualities.

2. What does the speaker suggest doing in the second part to make sure people love them for who they are?

Answer: In the second part of the poem, the speaker contemplates using hair dye to alter the color of their hair whether brown, black, or carrot. The intention behind this proposed change is to shift the focus away from their visually appealing yellow hair and encourage people to love them for their true essence, emphasizing the desire for authentic connections beyond superficial attractions.

3. Who is the old religious man in the poem, and what does he say about love?

Answer: The old religious man is a character mentioned in the poem, and he articulates a perspective on love rooted in spirituality. According to him, only God possesses the capability to love someone for who they truly are, untethered from superficial attributes such as the color of one's hair. This adds a layer of moral and divine complexity to the theme of love explored in the poem.

4. What does the term "honey-colored ramparts" mean, and why is it important in the poem?

Answer: "Honey-colored ramparts" is a metaphorical expression referring to the speaker's visually appealing yellow hair. This imagery is vital in the poem as it symbolizes an attractive physical trait that may act as a barrier, preventing others from seeing beyond the surface and appreciating the speaker's true self. It underscores the challenge of being objectified or superficially perceived based on external characteristics.

5. Why does the speaker want to change their hair color, and what does it say about what they want in a relationship?

Answer: The speaker contemplates changing their hair color as a means of challenging societal expectations and fostering genuine connections. The desire to be loved for who they are, as opposed to being defined by their yellow hair, reflects a longing for relationships founded on authenticity and deeper emotional connections. It highlights the speaker's quest for meaningful bonds that transcend superficial judgments.

6. What does the old religious man's idea about God's love add to the story?

Answer: The old religious man's assertion introduces a spiritual dimension to the poem, suggesting that divine love, represented by God, is the only form of love devoid of superficial considerations. This concept adds depth to the speaker's yearning for genuine love, emphasizing the rarity and purity of love that transcends physical attributes, aligning with a higher moral or spiritual understanding of genuine affection.

7. Why does the speaker mention "yesternight declare," and what does it mean?

Answer: The mention of "yesternight declare" implies that the old religious man shared his insights recently. This temporal aspect underscores the freshness and immediacy of the speaker's contemplation of love. The recent declaration holds significance as it catalyzes the speaker's introspection, prompting them to reconsider their approach to relationships in light of this newfound perspective.

8. How does the poem talk about how society thinks about looks, and why is this important?

Answer: The poem subtly addresses societal norms regarding physical appearance and beauty standards. The speaker's contemplation of changing their hair color reflects the societal pressure to conform to predefined notions of attractiveness. This is important because it resonates with real-life struggles where individuals may feel compelled to meet external expectations, impacting their self-esteem and influencing how they navigate relationships.

9. Why is the speaker thinking about changing their appearance, and how might this relate to what many people feel in real life?

Answer: The speaker contemplates changing their appearance as a response to societal expectations and a desire for acceptance. This reflects a common experience where individuals, in an attempt to conform to societal norms, may consider altering their looks to fit in or be perceived more favorably. The relatability of this theme mirrors the societal pressure many people feel to meet external standards, often at the expense of embracing their authentic selves.

10. What is the main message of the poem about love and acceptance?

Answer: At its core, the poem conveys a poignant message about the universal longing for authentic love and acceptance. It emphasizes the speaker's quest to be loved for their true self, transcending superficial attributes. The exploration of societal expectations, spiritual dimensions, and personal struggles resonates with the broader human experience, urging readers to reflect on the importance of genuine connections and the challenges of navigating societal pressures in the pursuit of authentic love and self-acceptance.