

Understanding the Poem

1. How do the shadows before noon differ from the shadows after noon? What do the two kinds of shadow represent?

Answer. In this poem, the shadows before and after noon are used to represent the relationship between two people. Noon, which is a brief period, represents the stage of absolute love. Similarly, the shadows before noon are compared to lovers before they completely understand each other. On the other hand, the shadows after noon are meant to describe the maturity of their relationship. Hence, the shadow before Noon is apparent, whereas, in the afternoon, it fades away.

2. Love is described as light. What makes the poet talk about shadows?

Answer. In the poem, the poet talks about the shadows, representing the ups and downs in a relationship based on love. The shadow expresses a bonding between two people, which deepens over time and is tested gradually, blossoming into a beautiful relationship. The length of the shadow portrays maturity in love. As depicted in the poem, the shortest span of the shadow is at noon, expressing complete understanding between two people.

3. Comment on the use of the image of the shadows for the idea that the poet wants to convey.

Answer. The poet has two explicit ideologies in the narration. The first ideology is to depict the bond of love between the lovers and the understanding between them. Here, in this ideology, the poet, based on the length of the shadow, compares the relationship. In the second ideology, the poet expresses a likeness to love being essential during the beginning and end stages of the relationship.

4. The poet seems to be addressing his beloved in the poem. What is the message he wishes to convey to her?

Answer. In the poem, the poet addresses his beloved one to convey the different stages of love to her. The poet tries to explain to his lady love that everything seems to be excellent and cream-like when the love is fresh. At the initial stage, people who are deeply in love tend to forget themselves. As they grow older, the relationship also gets more assertive, and they get to know each other much more closely and deeper, gaining a clear understanding of life. Over time, love grows with maturity encouraging them to fight all the odds, and face the ups and downs they come across.

5. Instead of 'A Lecture Upon Love' the poet calls the poem 'A Lecture Upon the Shadow'. What is the effect that this has on our reading of the poem?

Answer. In the poem, the poet highlights the concept of love which lasts an eternity for most couples. Therefore, the poet has attempted to explain the fragrance of love by defining shadows to compare the bond between two souls who are in love. When it comes to shadows, their length depends on time and the Sun's position during the day. The same philosophy applies to the relationship of love between two people, which reflects complex factors and circumstances such as emotional outbursts, misunderstandings, etc.

Language Work

1. Notice the spelling of the following words

houres shadowes Sunne
noone clearnesse behinde

The 'e' that was used in Donne's period got dropped from English orthography later. Pick out the other words in the poem that have this peculiar feature.

Answer. The other words in the poem that have this peculiar feature are:

i. Thine

ii. Worke

iii. Blinde

iv. Thee

2. Take note also that the apostrophe is not used for indicating the possessive form: loves philosophy.

Answer.

i. Produc'd

ii. Reduc'd

iii. Now'tis

iv. Attain'd

v. High'st

3. Examples from other poems from this period:

- How neatly **doe** we give one **onely** name
- To **parents** issue and the **sunnes** bright starre!

Answer.

Students can try on their own.

Try this out

Notice the adjectives in phrases such as 'infant loves' and 'brave clearnesse'. What is the meaning of these adjectives?

(i) in isolation

(ii) as part of these phrases

Answer.

(i) The meaning of the adjective in isolation is to be away from everyone or to stay alone.

(ii) The meaning of the adjective as part of these phrases means repetition of words at the starting of a line.