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Word Meanings

The following two common words are used in a different sense in the poem. Guess what they mean

bark

compass

Answer:

Bark – A ship.

Compass – The range of time.

Understanding The Poem

1. 'Constancy' is the theme of the poem. Indicate the words, phrases and images that suggest the theme.

Answer:

'Constancy' is not only the theme of the poem but is a valuable aspect of each and every relationship. Many phrases in the poem express this important quality. A few such expressions are mentioned below:

1. Love is not love which alters
2. Love is not love which bends
3. It is an ever-fixed mark
4. Never shaken
5. Love's not Time's fool

2. Why do you think the poet has used so many 'negatives' to make his statement?

Answer:

The poet has used so many 'negatives' as it is very effective to prove a point. The other side of the coin is highlighted to bring out the positive points of a particular statement correctly. Here, the poet puts all the negative aspects that love is taken for and then conveys that love here is something which is permanent and above physical beauty.

3. What does the line 'I never writ, nor no man ever loved' imply?

Answer:

The line 'I never writ, nor no man ever loved' implies that if the poet's thoughts on love are proved wrong, then he will withdraw all that he has written if no man has ever been in love.

4. Love is presented as the subject or doer of actions in the poem. Why do you think the poet has used this form rather than involving human agents?

Answer:

In this poem, it is not surprising that William Shakespeare has chosen the subject of love, and no human agents are involved in it. His choice is based on the underlying theme of the poem, the fickle nature of human beings. Here, love and the eternal being is the only constant. Therefore, when the poet explains all the qualities of love, he then chooses love and not a human being, as their sentiments and emotions change frequently. The poet should be appreciated for understanding well the nature of humans and for the wise decision taken by him in his composition.

5. Explain the phrases**a. his bending sickle's compass****b. Time's fool****Answer:**

a. Compass is a symbol of eternity. In the poem, it explains the changes that a relationship undergoes as it grows old. How the love of a man for his beloved becomes less as importance is given to beauty over spiritual love. Even if love never dies, the physical appearance of a person fades and withers as it falls prey to the compass sickle of time.

b. William Shakespeare conveys that love is not at the mercy of time. Even if a person becomes old, with it, even love should grow, as physical beauty falls prey to the compass sickle of time. Constancy is the main aspect which holds two people together in a relationship.

