

“To His Coy Mistress”

Comprehension Questions

1. What does the speaker want his love to do?
2. What justifications or reasoning does he employ for persuasive effect?
3. How would you describe his tone? What words best contribute to this tone?
4. Do the tone and message remain constant throughout, or is there a shift in the poem?
5. Do you imagine his reasoning was sufficiently persuasive? Why/why not?
6. Would such a poem move or impress you?
7. What is the poet's chosen meter? What is the poet's chosen rhyme scheme?
8. Which line or phrase best describes the "carpe diem" philosophy?
9. How is time presented in this work?

To His Coy Mistress

Andrew Marvell

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian **Ganges'** side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of **Humber** would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;

And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul **transpires**
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like **amorous** birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than **languish** in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough **strife**
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.