

Chapter 8. If Thou Must Love Me ...Sonnet XIV [Poem]

Passage 1

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
I love her for her smile ... her look ... her way
Of speaking gently, ... for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought

Identify the poetic form used by Browning to frame this work and list some of its characteristics as visible here.

Answer:

Browning has written the poem in the form of a sonnet. The poem has two quatrains (four line stanzas) and one sestet (six line stanza). It is written in iambic pentameter. Its main theme is 'love'. Browning elevates love by praising it for the purity of the feeling that it is.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
I love her for her smile ... her look ... her way
Of speaking gently, ... for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought

What according to Browning are the things that a woman should not be loved for?

Answer:

According to Browning, a woman should not merely be loved for her smile, her looks, her way of speaking or her way of thinking.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say

I love her for her smile ... her look ... her way
Of speaking gently, ... for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought

What does 'love's sake only' mean? What picture of love does the poet paint in this poem?

Answer:

The phrase 'love's sake only' means loving a person only to nurture the feeling of love. It means giving love to someone with the aim of spreading the feeling rather than gaining something from the relation. This kind of love is unconditional and the qualities or limitations of the people involved are not measured.

Passage 2

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'-
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,-and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,-

List the old English words used in the stanza. Whom are they used for?

Answer:

The poet uses the words 'thou', 'thee' and 'thine' in the stanza to refer to her lover and future husband Robert Browning.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'-
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,-and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,-

What does the poet mean by 'Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,-'

Answer:

The mentioned line means love should not be based on pity. A man should not love a woman because he feels sorry for her pitiable state and wishes to wipe her tears or rid her of her woes. This kind of feeling does not draw the true character of love.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'-
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,-and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,-

What reason does the poet give to opposing love based on outward aspects?

Answer:

The poet objects to love based on outward appearance as she believes that physical beauty is transient and may change as time goes by. When these things change, the love which once was so desired becomes undesired or unwanted.

Passage 3

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

What is the connection made by the poet between weeping and love?

Answer:

The poet says love which feeds on sympathy or pity will not last for long because a person will not need sympathy forever. When the person who once wept overcomes his or her grief, he/she will no longer need the love of the person giving him/her comfort.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

State the rhyme scheme of the entire poem.

Answer:

The rhyme scheme of the poem is a-b-b-a/a-b-b-a/c-d-c-d-c.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

Explain the last two lines of the stanza.

Answer:

Throughout the poem, the poet emphasises that though love is just an emotion, it is the only thing constant in this world. Everything that is physical changes with the passage of time. If love is based on such transitory elements, it will not survive for too long and will wither away. However, if we hold on to love for support and give it to others unconditionally, it (love) will live on forever.