

THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS

William Shakespeare

*WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), the greatest poet and playwright in English, was the third of eight children born to a glovemaking in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. He received little formal education. At eighteen, he married Anne Hathway, eight years his senior, and soon moved to London. Within few years, he was well known as a leading actor and playwright. His great tragedies include **Hamlet** (1602), **Othello** (1604), **King Lear** (1605), and **Macbeth** (1606). He wrote 154 sonnets. Some of them are addressed to an attractive young man, (the Earl of Southampton whom the poet urges to marry); others to a mysterious dark lady. A love triangle - two men to a woman - is suggested in a number of sonnets. 'The Marriage of True Minds' is 116th (CXVI) sonnet which defines the nature of true love.*



A. Work in small groups and discuss these questions:

1. What is love? Can there be different manifestations of love?
2. You love different persons in your life: your parents, brothers, sisters, friends, wife etc. What is common about your love to each of them?
3. At times you feel drawn to opposite sex? What is that which draws you to him/ her: love or mere physical attraction? How will you differentiate?

The Marriage Of True Minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:

O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come:
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom:-

It this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.



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B. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What is meant by 'the marriage of true minds'?
2. What is 'an ever-fixed mark'?
3. What is meant by 'Time's fool'? Is love 'Time's fool'? Why or why not?
4. What kind of love alters when it finds alteration?
5. Can external forces change love?
6. How does Shakespeare depict the permanent nature of love?
7. Why is love compared to a pole star?
8. Can you tag a price to love? Why or why not?
9. Can time affect love? How?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

marriage (n): union (used metaphorically)

admit (v): give leave to enter

impediments(n): obstacles, hindrances

alters (v): changes

bends (v): stoops

tempests (n): great disturbances, tumults (used metaphorically)

octave (n): stanza of eight lines

sestet (n): stanza of six lines

quatrains (n): stanza of four lines

couplet (n): stanza of two lines

writ (v): (old use) wrote

C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Attempt, after Shakespeare, a comprehensive definition of love.
2. Describe, after Shakespeare, the nature of true love.
3. What in your opinion is love related to - spirit or physical lust?
4. Narrate the gist of the poem in your own words.
5. Can Time control love? What can it do at its best?
6. Comment on the treatment of the theme of Love and Time in the poem.
7. How is the changelessness of love brought out in the first two quatrains?
8. What does the speaker declare in the final couplet? What makes him do so?
9. How is love contrasted with physical love?
10. Pick out metaphors used in the poem and comment on their implied meaning.
11. Discuss 'The Marriage of True Minds' as a sonnet.

- A **sonnet** is a poem of 14 lines either consisting of an *octave* followed by a *sestet* (Petrarchan sonnet) or three *quatrains* followed by a *couplet* (Shakespearean sonnet) with a special arrangement of rhymes. It is a concentrated expression of some single thought or feeling or situation. Subjectivity, spontaneity, sincerity, reflection, music and melody are some other important characteristics of a sonnet.

- A **metaphor** is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, usually implied not overtly stated, between two seemingly unlike things, e.g. 'marriage of true minds'

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

- Love is divine bliss
- True love can mould our character

C. 3. COMPOSITION

- Write a letter in about 150 words to your friend describing how your love for someone made you more determined to achieve something.
- Write a paragraph in about 100 words on 'Love and life'.

D. WORD STUDY

D.1. Dictionary Use

Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

marriage admit bark edge

D.2. Word-meaning

Match the words given in **column A** with their meanings given in **column B**

A

impediments
alters
bends
tempests
octave
sestet
quatrains
couplet

B

stanza of eight lines
stanza of two lines
stoops
tumults
obstacles
stanza of six lines
stanza of four lines
changes

E. GRAMMAR

Ex. 1. Read the following lines carefully:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments

Such a sentence beginning with '**Let**' is an imperative sentence. Mark carefully the structure of the sentence given below and make five sentences of your own on the same pattern:

Let me put my car in the garage.

Ex. 2. Read the following lines carefully:

It is the star to every wand' ring bark,

Love's not Time's fool,

Mark the use of apostrophe to show the missing letter 'e' in 'wandering' and 'i' in 'Love is'. The latter is the example of contraction of auxiliary verb ; eg 'I'm' for 'I am' etc. Note also the use of apostrophe in 'Time's fool' to show possession or ownership.

Find out the examples of apostrophe in the poem and decide why apostrophe has been used in each of them

F. ACTIVITIES

Ex. 1. Find out from a reference book the difference between a metaphor and a simile.

Ex. 2. Find out from a reference book the origin, types and features of a sonnet. Do a project work on it.

