How is love presented in Valentine?

In Valentine Duffy presents love in a realistic way. The connotations of ‘Valentine’ is that it is something special given once a year to someone you love. However, Duffy rejects this by suggesting love needs to be more realistic.

At the start of the poem Duffy uses a determiner “Not a red rose or a satin heart” in a short sentence to show that the traditional ideas relating to valentines in the opening of the poem are not going to be followed. Connotations of ‘red’ and ‘satin’ are love and luxury: here she rejects this as too easy and simplistic. As a feminist poet she may have done this to suggest how valentines and the idea of these are outmoded and don’t actually support the idea of equality. Furthermore, traditional ideas relating to the ideals of love are rejected through the use of the poem as an extended metaphor in free verse. Love is continuously compared to an ‘onion’, as like and onion, love has many layers and facets. Duffy shows a range of emotions in the poem presenting the idea that love is real, painful and truthful at times.

Several similes linked to emotions are used “it will blind you with tears like a lover” which could link to being blinded by love in the initial stage of a relationship but also that love changes and does cause pain and tears. Her intention her may be to imply that love is painful, but also worth fighting for. Another way imagery is used is the metaphor “it is a moon wrapped in brown paper” which has positive connotations of being safe and it seems as if something special has been wrapped in ‘brown paper’. It is waiting to be unwrapped and discovered just like love.

As the poem progresses Duffy uses harsh verbs “shrink and “cling” the latter is repeated to perhaps show that in long term relationships events and things which happen do stay with the person that they happen to. Although, ‘cling’ is used for the scent of the onion perhaps it is a wider metaphor for love and the change or effect it can have on you. Duffy as a catholic growing up would have been taught about certain religious aspects of life and marriage and perhaps the reality in adulthood is different to what she was taught. Here we see that Duffy is trying to show that love is a deeper feeling than just the initial stages of passion and maybe the symbolic meaning of the poem is to show that true love, like an onion, has many stages; usefulness, promise, enjoyment, pain and longevity as suggested in the metaphor of “shrunk to a wedding ring”.

Read the poem response:

Where does the writer link to the question?

Where is the link to terminology?

How many short snappy quotes have been referenced?

Where is the analysis?

Where is the effect on the reader?

Where is the context linked? How many times? What is done with it?

Is there zooming in on words or connotations? How is this done?

Does the writer explore more than one idea relating to quotes?

Do you think the analysis is developed?

What would you add to this?

Look at you pink criteria for AO1, AO2 and context? What band & Why?

How is love presented in the poem Valentine?

In the poem Valentine, Duffy presents love in a very realistic and unconventional way. We can see this from the start of the poem “not a red rose or a satin heart”. This shows that she is opposing the way that love is looked at normally, and perhaps does not see love to be that romantic all the time. Duffy uses repetition of the word “onion” all throughout the poem and this suggests that an onion could represent her view of love and suggests that she believes that love has many layers, just like an onion. The poem is written in an open form which makes it easier to spot the tone and also helps to make certain lines stand out more eg. “take it” which is an imperative and projects a sense of urgency to the reader. The tone is very important throughout the poem and changes frequently but is mostly negatively underlying as Duffy has quite a negative view of love. Duffy is a very influential poet and is a feminist which means she usually writes from a female point of view, which is why the poem might be more appealing to female readers. Duffy uses language to express her hate towards conventional love and how she rejects society’s “love culture”. She uses many metaphors such as “undressing of love” and “it will make your reflection a wobbling photo of grief” which helps the reader connect more to the poem and can also be seen as emotive language.

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