

READINGS FROM POETRY and LITERATURE

(alphabetical by author)

From A Natural History Of Love By Diane Ackerman

Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful. It has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love's spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable? Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots spreading into deep and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of loving, and being loved.

O Tell Me the Truth About Love by W. H. Auden

Some say that love's a little boy,
And some say it's a bird,
Some say it makes the world go round,
And some say that's absurd,
And when I asked the man next-door,
Who looked as if he knew,
His wife got very cross indeed,
And said it wouldn't do.

Can it pull extraordinary faces?
Is it usually sick on a swing?
Does it spend all of its time at the races,
Or fiddling with pieces of string?
Has it views of its own about money?
Does it think Patriotism enough?
Are its stories vulgar or funny?
O tell me the truth about love.

When it comes, will it come without warning,
Just as I'm picking my nose?
Will it knock on my door in the morning,
Or tread in the bus on my toes?
Will it come like a change in the weather?

Will its greeting be courteous or rough?
Will it alter my life forever?
O tell me the truth about love.

A Marriage by Michael Blumenthal

You are holding up a ceiling
With both arms. It is very heavy,
But you must hold it up, or else
It will fall down on you. Your arms
Are tired, terribly tired,
And, as the day goes on, it feels
As if either your arms or the ceiling
Will soon collapse.
But then,
Unexpectedly,
Something wonderful happens.
Someone,
A man or a woman,
Walks into the room
And holds their arms up
To the ceiling beside you.
So you finally get
To take down your arms.
You feel the relief of respite,
The blood flowing back
To your fingers and arms.
And when your partner's arms tire,
You hold up your own again
To relieve him again.
And this can go on like this for many years
Without the house falling.

An Odd Conceit by Nicholas Breton (1545 ? 1626)

Lovely kind, and kindly loving,
Such a mind were worth the moving:
Truly fair, and fairly true ?
Where are all these, but in you?
Wisely kind, and kindly wise;
Blessed life, where such love lies!
Wise, and kind, and fair, and true?

Lovely live all these in you.
Sweetly dear, and dearly sweet;
Blessed, where these blessings meet!
Sweet, fair, wise, kind, blessed, true?
Blessed be all these in you!

How Do I Love Thee? by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints – I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Rabbi Ben Ezra (Excerpt) by Robert Browning

Grow old with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in this hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

From The Hungering Dark By Frederick Buechner

Dostoevski describes Alexei Karamazov falling asleep and dreaming about the wedding at Cana, and for him too it is a dream of indescribable joy, but when he wakes from it he does a curious thing. He throws himself down on the earth and embraces it. He kisses the earth and among tears that are in no way sentimental because they are turned not inward but outward, he forgives the earth and begs its forgiveness and vows to love it forever. And that is the heart of it, after all, and matrimony is called holy because this brave and fateful promise of a man and a woman to love and honor and serve each other through thick and thin looks

beyond itself to more fateful promises still and speaks mightily of what human life at its most human and its most alive and most holy must always be.

I Love You by Roy Croft

I love you,
Not only for what you are,
But for what I am when I am with you.
I love you
Not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making
of me.
I love you for ignoring the possibilities of the fool in me
And for laying firm hold of the possibilities for good.
Why do I love you?
I love you for closing your eyes to the discords
And for adding to the music in me by worshipful listening.
I love you because you are helping me to make of the lumber of my life,
Not a tavern but a temple;
And out of the words of my every day
Not a reproach but a song.
I love you because you have done more than any creed to make me happy.
You have done it without a word, without a touch, without a sign.
You have done it just by being yourself.
After all, perhaps that is what love means.

i carry your heart with me by e.e. cummings

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart)
i am never without it
(anywhere i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done by only me
is your doing, my darling)
i fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet)
i want no world (for beautiful, you are my world, my true)
and it's you whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you
here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;
which grows higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart
i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

it is at moments after i have dreamed by e.e. cummings

it is at moments after I have dreamed
of the rare entertainment of your eyes,
when (being fool to fancy) I have deemed
with your peculiar mouth my heart made wise;
at moments when the glassy darkness holds
the genuine apparition of your smile
(it was through tears always) and silence moulds
such strangeness as was mine a little while;
moments when my once more illustrious arms
are filled with fascination, when my breast
wears the intolerant brightness of your charms:
one pierced moment whiter than the rest
-turning from the tremendous lie of sleep
i watch the roses of the day grow deep
All that is profane becomes sacred again.

From The Hymn Of The Universe By Teilhard De Chardin

Only love can bring individual beings to their perfect completion, as individuals, by uniting them one with another, because only love takes possession of them and unites them by what lies deepest within them. This is simply a fact of our everyday experience. For indeed at what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say that they are lost in one another? And is not love all the time achieving – in couples, in teams, all around us – the magical and reputedly contradictory feat of personalizing through totalizing? And why should not what is thus daily achieved on a small scale be repeated one day on worldwide dimensions? Humanity, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, of the one with the many: all these are regarded as utopian fantasies, yet they are biologically necessary; and if we would see them made flesh in the world what more need we do than imagine our power to love growing and broadening, till it can embrace the totality of human beings and of the earth?

From the Divine Comedy by Dante

“The love of God, unutterable and perfect, flows into a pure soul the way that light rushes into a transparent object. The more love that it finds, the more it gives itself; so that, as we grow clear and open. The more complete the joy of loving is. And the more souls who resonate together. The greater the intensity of their love, For, mirror-like, each soul reflects the others.”

My Sunshine by Hervé Desbois

When the dawn emerges from the night – it is you I see
When I emerge from the silence of the dark – it is you I see
You are like a river that flows through my dreams
Without you, where would I find light?
When the city veils your smile
It is you I look for
When life batters me and steals my sighs – it is you I look for
You are a fortress that guards and protects me
Without you, where is my shelter, my refuge?
Let me lay down and sleep in the shadow of your eyes
When I am exhausted by the journey of time
As it passes so swiftly and so indifferently
I treasure the sight of the smile on your lips
You are the brilliant light of the sun in my skies
You, my love, my happiness.

A Comfortable Couple by Charles Dickens

We're too old to be single.
Why shouldn't we both be married instead of sitting through the long winter evenings by our solitary fireplaces? Why shouldn't we make one fireplace of it? Come, let's be a comfortable couple and take care of each other!
How glad we shall be, that we have somebody we are fond of always, to talk to and sit with. Let's be a comfortable couple. Now do, my dear.

A Reading from Adam Bede by George Eliot

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life, to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“The world rolls; the circumstances vary every hour. The angels that inhabit this temple of the body appear at the windows, and the gnomes and vices also. A man and woman's once flaming regard is sobered by time in either breast, and losing in violence what it gains in extent, it becomes a thorough good understanding.
At last they discover that all which at first drew them together – those once sacred features, that magical play of charms – was deciduous, had a prospective end, like the scaffolding by which the house was built; and the purification of the intellect

and the heart, from year to year, is the real marriage.
Thus are we put in training for a love which knows not sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeks virtue and wisdom everywhere.
We are by nature observers, and thereby learners. That is our permanent state.
But we are often made to feel that our affections are but tents of a night.
There are moments when the affections rule and absorb us, and make our happiness dependent on a person or persons.
But the mind is presently seen again – its overarching vault, bright with galaxies of immutable lights, and the warm loves and fears that swept over us as clouds, must lose their finite character and blend with God, to attain their own perfection.
But we need not fear that we can lose any thing by the progress of the soul.
The soul may be trusted to the end. That which is so beautiful and attractive, as these relations between lovers must be succeeded and supplanted only by what is more beautiful, and so on for ever.”

From The Prophet by Kahill Gibran

You were born together, and together you shall be forever more.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Ah, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.
Love one another, but make not a bond of love;
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone, though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping,
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together, yet not too near together;
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

On Love by Kahill Gibran

When love beckons to you, follow him,
Thought his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him.
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.
And when he speaks to you believe him,
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north

Wind lays waste the garden.
For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you.
Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.
Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tender branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.
Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.
He threshes you to make you naked. He sifts you to free you from your husks.
He grind you to whiteness. He kneads you until you are pliant;
And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast.
Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed.
For love is sufficient unto love.

Summer Poem By Heather Holden

I will bring you flowers
Every morning for your breakfast
And you will kiss me
With flowers in your mouth
And you will bring me flowers
Every morning when you wake
And look at me with flower sin your eyes

A Poem for a Sister By: Larry Howland

I think of all the things we shared when we were children small.
I close my eyes and travel back and still can see it all.
Although it was so long ago.
It seems like Yesterday.
I sometimes wish those childhood days had never gone away.
The closeness only sisters know is etched in both our hearts.
And may your hopes and dreams come true as your new marriage starts.

Love is a Great Thing by Thomas a Kempis (Christian writer, 1380-1471)

Love is a great thing, a great good in every way; it alone lightens what is heavy, and leads smoothly over all roughness. For it carries a burden without being burdened, and makes every bitter thing sweet and tasty. Love wants to be lifted up, not held back by anything low. Love wants to be free, and far from all worldly desires, so that its inner vision may not be dimmed and good fortune bind it or misfortune cast it down. Nothing is sweeter than love; nothing stronger,

nothing higher, nothing wider; nothing happier, nothing fuller, nothing better in heaven and earth; for love is born of God . . . Love keeps watch and is never unaware, even when it sleeps; tired, it is never exhausted; hindered, it is never defeated; alarmed, it is never afraid; but like a living flame and a burning torch it bursts upward and blazes forth. . . Love is quick, sincere, dutiful, joyous, and pleasant; brave, patient, faithful, prudent, serene, and vigorous; and it never seeks itself. For whenever we seek ourselves, we fall away from love. Love is watchful, humble, and upright; not weak, or frivolous, or directed toward vain things; temperate, pure, steady, calm, and alert in all the senses. Love is devoted and thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in him, even when it doesn't taste his sweetness, for without pain no one can live in love.

After Love by Maxine Kumin

Afterwards, the compromise.
Bodies resume their boundaries.
These legs, for instance, mine.
Your arms take you back in.
Spoons of our fingers, lips
Admit their ownership.
The nodding yawns, a door
Blows aimlessly ajar
And overhead, a plane
Singsongs coming down.
Nothing is changed, except
There was a moment when
The wolf, the mongering wolf
Who stands outside the self
Lay lightly down, and slept.

A Lasting Marriage By Michael C. Mack

A close relationship is based on friendship.
A caring relationship is based on sharing and understanding.
A romantic relationship is based on giving freely and on the ability to receive gratefully and graciously.
An intimate relationship is based on openness and honesty.
An affectionate relationship is based on patience and acceptance.
A secure relationship is based not on promise, but rather on trust, respect, faithfulness, and the ability to forgive.
A lasting marriage is based on all of these, bound together by love.

The Passionate Shepherd To His Love by Christopher Marlowe

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove,
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.
And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.
And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle:
A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold:
A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.
The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning;
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

Two Trees by Janet Miles

A portion of your soul has been entwined with mine.
A gentle kind of togetherness, while, separate we stand.
As two trees deeply rooted in separate plots of ground,
While their topmost branches come together,
Forming a miracle of lace against the heavens.

From Gift from the Sea by Anne Morrør Lindbergh

When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. It is even a lie to pretend to. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity

possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity – in freedom, in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern. The only real security is not in owning or possessing, not in demanding or expecting, not in hoping, even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking back to what was in nostalgia, nor forward to what it might be in dread or anticipation, but living in present relationship and accepting it as it is now. For relationships, too, must be like islands, one must accept them for what they are here and now, within their limits - islands surrounded by and interrupted by the sea, and continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life, of intermittency.

The Confirmation by Edwin Muir

Yes, yours, my love, is the right human face.
I, in my mind, had waited for this long,
Seeing the false and searching for the true,
Then found you as a traveler finds a place
Of welcome suddenly amid the wrong
Valleys and rocks and twisting roads. But you,
What shall I call you? A fountain in a waste,
A well of water in a country dry,
Or anything that's honest and good, an eye
That makes the whole world bright. Your open heart,
Simple with giving, gives the primal deed,
The first good world, the blossom, the blowing seed,
The hearth, the steadfast land, the wandering sea.
Not beautiful or rare in every part.

Tin Wedding Whistle by Ogden Nash

Though you know it anyhow
Listen to, darling, now,
Proving what I need not prove
How I know I love you, love.
Near and far, near and far,
I am happy where you are;
Likewise I have never learnt
How to be where you aren't.
Far and wide, far and wide,
I can walk with you beside;
Furthermore, I tell you what,

I sit and sulk where you are not.
Visitors remark my frown
When you're upstairs and I am down,
Yes, and I'm afraid I pout
When I'm indoors and you are out.
In fact I care not where you be,
Just as long as it's with me.
In all your absence I glimpse
Fire and flood and trolls and imps.
Is your train a minute slothful?
I goad the stationmaster wrathful.
When with friends to bridge you drive
I never know if you're alive,
And when you linger late in shops
I long to telephone the cops.
Yet how worth the waiting for,
To see you coming through the door.
Somehow, I can be complacent
Never but with you adjacent.
Near and far, near and far,
I am happy where you are;
Likewise, I have never learnt
How to be it where you aren't.
Then grudge me not for fond endeavor,
To hold you in my sight forever;
Let none, not even you, disparage
Such valid reason for a marriage.

Sonnet XLVIII By Pablo Neruda

Two happy lovers make one single bread,
One single drop of moonlight in the grass.
When they walk, the leave two shadows that merge,
And they leave one single sun blazing in their bed.

Sonnet XII By Pablo Neruda

Loving is a journey with water and with stars,
With smothered air and abrupt storms of flour:
Loving is a clash of lightening bolts
And two bodies defeated by a single drop of honey.
Kiss by kiss move across your small infinity,

Your borders, your rivers, your tiny villages,
And the gentile fire transformed into delight
Runs through the narrow pathways of the blood
Until it plunges, like a dark carnation,
Until it is and is no more than a flash in the night.

In My Sky at Twilight – Pablo Neruda

You are taken in the net of my music, my love
and my nets of music are as wide as the sky.
My soul is born on the shore of your eyes of mourning.
In your eyes of mourning the land of dreams begins.

Sonnet XVII By Pablo Neruda

I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose,
topaz or arrow of carnations that propagate fire:
I love you as certain dark things are loved,
secretly, between the shadow and the soul.
I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom and carries
hidden within itself the light of those flowers,
and thanks to your love, darkly in my body
lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth.
I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,
I love you simply, without problems or pride:
I love you in this way because I know no other way of loving
but this, in which there is no I or you,
so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand,
so intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close.

A Prayer for a Wedding by Joel Oppenheimer

Because everyone knows exactly what's good for another

Because very few see

Because a man and a woman may just possibly look at each other

Because a man or a woman can do anything he or she pleases

Because you can reach any point in your life saying: now, I want this

Because eventually it occurs we want each other, we want to know each other,
even stupidly, even ugly

Because there is at best a simple need in two people to try and reach some simple
ground

Because that simple ground is not so simple

Because we are human beings gathered together whether we like it or not

Because we are human beings reaching out to touch

Because sometimes we grow
We ask a blessing on this marriage
We ask that some simplicity be allowed
We ask their happiness
We ask that this couple be known for what it is and that the light shine upon it
We ask a blessing for their marriage

The Art of A Good Marriage by Wilfred Arian Peterson

A good marriage must be created.
It is never being too old to hold hands,
It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day,
It is never going to sleep angry,
It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives,
It is standing together and facing the world,
It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family,
It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways,
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget,
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow,
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful,
It is not only marrying the right person, it is being the right partner.

To Love Another by Rainer Maria Rilke (Austro-German, 1875-1926)

For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has ever been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation. Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person. It is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world in himself for the sake of another person; it is a great, demanding claim on him, something that chooses him and calls him to vast distance . . .

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvelous living side-by-side can grow up for them, if they succeed in loving the expanse between them, which gives them the possibility of seeing each other as a whole and before the immense sky.

From First Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke

Understand, I'll slip quietly away from the noisy crowd
When I see the pale stars rising, blooming over the oaks.

I'll pursue solitary pathways through the pale twilit meadows,
With only this one dream:
You come too.

A Quote from Rainer Maria Rilke

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvelous living side-by-side can grow up for them, if they succeed in loving the expanse between them, which gives them the possibility of always seeing each other as a whole and before an immense sky.

A Birthday by Christina Rossetti

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with varn and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

Sonnet No. 18 by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed:
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,

Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet 47 by William Shakespeare

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other:
When that mine eye is famish'd for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,
And to the painted banquet bids my heart;
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part:
So, either by thy picture or my love,
Thy self away, art present still with me;
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,
And I am still with them, and they with thee;
Or, if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
Awakes my heart, to heart's and eyes' delight.

Sonnet No. 116 by William Shakespeare

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;
Oh, no! It is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering 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 it bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Love's Philosophy by Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Fountains mingle with the River
And the Rivers with the Ocean,

The winds of Heaven mix forever
 With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
 All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
 Why not I with thine??
See the mountains kiss high heaven
 And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
 If it disdained its brother,
And the sunlight clasps the earth
 And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
 If thou kiss not me?

Love Is by Susan Polis Schutz

Love is being happy for the other person when they are happy

Being sad for the other person when they are sad.

Being together in good times and being together in bad times.

Love is the source of strength.

Love is being honest with yourself at all times and being honest with the other person at all times, telling, listening, respecting the truth and never pretending.

Love is the source of reality.

Love is an understanding that is so complete that you feel as if you are a part of the other person, accepting the other person just the way they are and not trying to change them to be something else.

Love is the source of unity.

Love is the freedom to pursue your own desires while sharing your experiences with the other person the growth of one individual alongside of and together with the growth of another individual.

Love is the source of success.

Love is the excitement of planning things together, the excitement of doing things together.

Love is the source of the future.

Love is the fury of the storm the calm of the rainbow.

Love is the source of passion.

Love is giving and taking in a daily situation, being patient with each other's needs and desires.

Love is the source of sharing.

Love is knowing that the other person will always be with you regardless of what happens.

Missing the other person when they are away but remaining near in heart at all times.

Love is the source of security.

Love is the source of life.

Words of Wisdom by Bill Swetmon

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say, "I love you" at least once a day.

It is at no time taking the other for granted.

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.

It is standing together facing life.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is doing things for each other not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude.

It is not looking for perfection in each other.

It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding, and a sense of humor.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is finding room for the things of the spirit.

It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.

It is establishing a relationship in which independence is equal, dependence is mutual, and obligation is reciprocal.

It is not marrying the right partner; it is being the right partner

You and I by Kuan Tao-Sheng

You and I have so much love

That it burns like a fire,

In which we bake a lump of clay

Molded into a figure of you and a figure of me.

Then we take both of them, and break them into pieces,

And mix the pieces with water, and mold a figure of you, and a figure of me.

I am in your clay. You are in my clay.

In life we share a single quilt.

In death we will share one bed.

Sara Teasdale

Peace flows into me as the tide to the pool by the shore;

It is mine forevermore, it will not ebb like the sea.

I am the pool of blue that worships the vivid sky;
My hopes were heaven-high, they are all fulfilled in you,

I am the pool of gold when sunset burns and dies – you are my deepening skies;
Give me your stars to hold.

From a Letter to His Brother Theo by Vincent Van Gogh

I want to paint men and women with that something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize... express the love of two lovers by a wedding of two complementary colors, their mingling and opposition, the mysterious vibration of kindred tones. To express the thought of a brow by the radiance of a light tone against a somber background. To express hope by some star, the eagerness of a soul by a sunset radiance.

Love Song – William Carlos Williams

Sweep the house clean, hang fresh curtains in the windows put on a new dress and come with me!

The elm is scattering its little loaves of sweet smells from a white sky!

Who shall hear of us in the time to come?

Let him say there was a burst of fragrance from black branches.

To His Wife Mary by William Wordsworth

Every day every hour every moment makes me feel more deeply how blessed we are in each other, how purely how faithfully how ardently, and how tenderly we love each other; I put this last word last because, though I am persuaded that a deep affection is not uncommon in married life, yet I am confident that a lively, gushing, thought-employing, spirit-stirring, passion of love is very rare even among good people...
O, I love you with a passion of love which grows 'til I tremble to think of its strength.

For the Union of You and Me by Rabindranath Tagore

It is for the union of you and me that there is light in the sky.

It is for the union of you and me that the earth is decked in dusky green.

It is for the union of you and me that the night sits motionless with the world in her arms;

Dawn appears opening the eastern door with sweet murmurs in her voice.

The boat of hope sails along the currents of eternity toward that union; flowers of the ages are being gathered together for its welcoming ritual.

It is for the union of you and me that this heart of mine, in the garb of a bride,
Has proceeded from birth to birth upon the surface of this ever-turning world to
chase the beloved.

He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven by W.B. Yeats

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Why Marriage? – Author Unknown

Because to the depths of me, I long to love one person,
With all my heart, my soul, my mind my body . . .
Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me,
Who won't hold them against me, who loves me when I'm unlikable,
Who sees the small child in me, and who looks for then divine potential of me ...
Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night
With someone who thanks God for me,
With someone I feel blessed to hold . . .
Because marriage means opportunity to grow in love and friendship . . .
Because marriage is a discipline to be added to a list of achievements ...
Because marriages do not fail, people fail
When they enter into marriage expecting another to make them whole . . .
Because knowing this, I promise myself to take full responsibility
For my spiritual, mental and physical wholeness,
I create me, I take half of the responsibility for my marriage
Together we create our marriage . . .
Because with this understanding the possibilities are limitless.

Marriage – Author unknown

The institution of marriage was begun that a man and a woman might learn how
to love and, in loving, know joy; that a man and a woman might learn how to
share pain and loneliness and, in sharing, know strength; that a man and a woman
might learn how to give and, in giving, know communion.
The institution of marriage was begun that a man and a woman might, through
their joy, their strength, and their communion, become creators of life itself.

Marriage is a high and holy state, to be held in honor among all men and women. Marriage is a low and common state, to be built on the stuff of daily life. Men and women are not angels, nor are they gods. Love can become hatred; joy, sorrow; marriage, divorce. But human beings are not condemned to failure. Love can grow even in a real world. The wounds of sorrow can be healed, and new life built on the learnings of the old. This is the reason for our gathering today; to renew our faith in the strength of hope and the power of love.

A Chinese Poem from the 1st Century

I want to be your friend
For ever and ever without break or decay
When the hills are all flat
And the rivers are all dry
When it lightens and thunders in winter
When it rains and snows in summer
When Heaven and Earth mingle
Not till then will I part from you.

I Knew That I Had Been Touched By Love –Author unknown

I knew that I had been touched by love the first time I saw you, and I felt your warmth, and I heard your laughter.
I knew that I had been touched by love when I was hurting from something that happened, and you came along and made the hurt go away.
I knew that I had been touched by love when I quit making plans with my friends, and started dreaming dreams with you.
I knew that I had been touched by love when suddenly I stopped thinking in terms of “me,” and started thinking in terms of “we”.
I knew that I had been touched by love when suddenly I couldn't make any decisions by myself anymore, and I had the strong desire to share everything with you.
I knew that I had been touched by love the first time we spent alone together, and I knew I wanted to stay with you forever because I had never felt this touched by love.

All About Love – Author Unknown

Love is the irresistible desire to be desired irresistibly.
Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and border and salute each other.
To love is to place our happiness in the happiness of another.

Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outwards together in the same direction.

Love from one being to another can only be that two people come nearer, recognize and protect and comfort each other.

Love is a feeling that emanates from the heart.

There is no remedy for love but to love more.

Love works miracles everyday: such as weakening the strong, and strengthening the weak; making fools of the wise, and wise men of fools;

favoring the passions, destroying reason, and, in a word, turning everything topsy-turvy.

Love looks not with the eye, but with the mind; and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

Love doesn't make the world go round. Love is what makes the ride worthwhile.

Love is the triumph of imagination over intelligence.

Love isn't perfect, love is just love.

Readings from Various Cultures

An Irish Blessing

May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.

Irish Blessing

May the wind be always at your back.
May the road rise up to meet you.
May the sunshine warm on your face,
The rains fall soft on your fields.
Until we meet again, may the Lord
Hold you in the hollow of his hand.

A Chinese Poem from the 1st Century

I want to be your friend.
For ever and ever without break or decay.
When the hills are all flat.
And the rivers are all dry.
When it lightens and thunders in winter.
When it rains and snows in summer.

When Heaven and Earth mingle-
Not till then will I part from you.

Eskimo Love Song

You are my husband
You are my wife
My feet shall run because of you
My feet dance because of you
My heart shall beat because of you
My eyes see because of you
My mind thinks because of you
And I shall love because of you

Hawaiian Song

Here all seeking is over
The lost has been found,
A mate has been found
To share the chills of winter-
Now love asks
That you be united.
Here is a place to rest,
A place to sleep,
A place in heaven.
Now two are becoming one,
The black night scattered
The eastern sky grows bright.
At last the great day has come!

Cherokee Prayer

God in heaven above please protect the ones we love.
We honor all you created as we pledge our hearts and lives together.
We honor mother earth and ask for our marriage to be abundant and grow
stronger through the seasons; We
honor fire – and ask we sail through life safe and calm as in our father's arms; We
honor water -to clean and soothe our relationship – that it may never thirst for
love; With
all the forces of the universe that you created, we pray for harmony and true
happiness as we forever grow young together. Amen.

Native American Apache

Treat yourselves and each other with respect,
and remind yourselves often of what brought you together.
Give the highest priority to the tenderness,
gentleness and kindness that your connection deserves.
When frustration, difficulties and fear assail your relationship,
as they threaten all relationships at one time or another,
remember to focus on what is right between you,
not just the part that seems wrong.
In this way, you can ride out the storms when clouds hide the face of
the sun in your lives, remembering that even if you lose sight of it for
a moment, the sun is still there.
And if each of you takes responsibility for the quality of your life
together, it will be marked by abundance and delight.

From A Navajo Wedding Ceremony

Now you have lit a fire and that fire shall not go out.
The two of you now have a fire that represents love,
understanding and a philosophy of life.
It will give you heat, food, warmth and happiness.
The new fire represents a new beginning – a new life and a new family.
The fire shall keep burning; you shall stay together.
You have lit the fire for life, until old age separates you.

Navajo Prayer

Be swift like the wind in loving each other.
Be brave like the sea in loving each other.
Be gentle like the breeze in loving each other.
Be patient like the sun who waits and watches the four changes of the
earth in loving each other.
Be wise like the roaring of the thunderclouds and lightning in loving
each other.
Be shining like the morning dawn in loving each other.
Be proud like the tree who stands without bending in loving each other.
Now, forever, forever there will be no more loneliness
Because your worlds are joined together with the world, forever,
forever.

Cherokee Prayer

God in heaven above please protect the ones we love.

We honor all you created as we pledge our hearts and lives together.
We honor Mother Earth and ask for our marriage to be abundant
and grow stronger through the seasons.
We honor fire and ask that our union be warm and glowing with love in
our hearts.
We honor wind and ask that we sail through life safe and calm as in our
father's arms.
We honor water to clean and soothe our relationship, that it may never
thirst for love.
With all the forces of the universe you created,
we pray for harmony as we grow forever young together. Amen.

Hymn to the Sun from the Great Plains Indians

O morning star! When you look down upon us,
Give us peace and refreshing sleep.
Great Spirit! Bless our children, friends and visitors through a happy life.
May our trails lie straight and level before us.
Let us live to behold.
We are all your children and ask these things with good hearts.

Apache Prayer

Now you will feel no rain.
For each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold.
For each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now you will feel no loneliness.
For each of you will be companionship to the other.
Now you are two persons.
But there is only one life before you.
May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years.
May happiness be your companion and your days be good and long upon the
earth.
Bless you both.

Navajo Prayer

When you were children, you talked like children,
But now that you've grown, you should be done with childish things and put them
away.

When you were children, you looked into a mirror that gave only a blurred reflection of reality.

But with love and maturity, you shouldn't be afraid to look into that mirror and see each other face to face.

Be swift like the wind in loving each other.

Be brave like the sea in loving each other.

Be gentle like the breeze in loving each other.

Be patient like the sun who waits and watches
the four changes of the earth in loving each other.

Be wise like the roaring of the thunderclouds and lightening in loving each other.

Be shining like the morning dawn in loving each other.

Be flexible like the sapling that bends with the wind in loving each other.

Be brilliant like the rainbow colors in loving each other,

Now, forever, forever, there will be no more loneliness

Because your words are joined together with the world.

Forever, forever.

Shoshone Wedding Song

Not a spirit, not a bird,

That was my flute you heard

Last night by the river.

When you came with you wicker jar

Where the river tugs at the windows.

That was my flute you heard

Calling, Come to the willows.

Not a spirit not a bird

Made the lupine rustle.

That was my heart you heard

And the rustle of my hem

As I walked in the grasses

That was my heart you heard

When you came to the willows

Sufi Readings - Honoring the great poetry of Hafiz and Rumi, they have their own little section.

Rumi

The minute I heard my first love story

I started looking for you, not knowing

How blind that was.
Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.
They're in each other all along.

Rumi

You that love lovers
This is your home. Welcome!
In the midst of making form, love
Made this form that melts form,
With love for the door,
Soul the vestibule.
Watch the dust grains moving
In the light near the window.
Their dance is our dance.
We rarely hear the inward music,
But we're all dancing to it nevertheless,
Directed by the one who teaches us,
The pure joy of the sun,
Our music master.

Rumi

When a man and a woman become one,
That "One" is You
Where is this "we" and this "I"?
By the side of the Beloved.
You made this "we" and this "I" in order that you might play
This game of courtship with yourself,
That all "You's" and "I's" might become one soul
And finally drown in the Beloved.

Rumi

Pale sunlight
Pale the wall
Love moves away
The light changes
I need more grace
than I thought

Precious Love by Rumi

Oh God! I have discovered love!
How marvelous! How good! How beautiful it is!
My body is warm from the heat of this love
How secret! How deep! How obvious it is!
I offer my salutations to the moon and the stars
to all my brothers and all my sisters
I offer my salutations to the spirit of passion
that aroused and excited this universe and all it contains
I have fallen unable to rise
What kind of trap is this?
What chains have tied my hands and feet?
It is so strange and so wonderful
this loving helplessness of mine
Be silent
Do not reveal the secret of my precious love.

The Alchemy of Love by Rumi

You come to us from another world
From beyond the stars and void of space.
Transcendent, pure, of unimaginable beauty,
Bringing with you the essence of love.

You transform all who are touched by you.
Mundane concerns, troubles and sorrows
dissolve in your presence,
Bringing joy to ruler and ruled,
To peasant and king
You bewilder us with your grace.
All evils transform into goodness.

You are the master alchemist.
You light the fire of love in earth and sky
in the heart and soul of every being.
Through your loving
Existence and non-existence merge.
All opposites unite.

Now is the Time by Hafiz

Now is the time to know

That all that you do is sacred.

Now, why not consider a lasting truce with yourself and God.

Now is the time to understand that all your ideas of right and wrong

Were just a child's training wheels

To be laid aside when you finally live with veracity and love.