

LESSON PLAN TITLE: All You Need is Love (Poems)

Writer-in-Residence: Tony DeGenaro

Grade Level: 9th-12th

Model Works Used: “Ode to Dalya’s Bald Spot” by Angel Nafis, “February & my love is in another state” by José Olivarez, “Sonnet 43” by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Literary Learning objective(s): Read, respond to, and discuss thematic poetry; recreate genre conventions with original ideas; brainstorm, develop, and draft original poems

Themes: Love, reflection

MDE/SEL Standards: See list at end of lesson plan

Materials Needed: attached poems, attached worksheet, pen/pencil

Opening Activity / Pre-Discussion

Brainstorm on the following questions:

1. What do you/we know about love?
2. What do you/we know about love poems?

Think about your answers to those two questions while reading/listening to an example of a love poem (attached) ([link](#))

Model Poem Discussion

Now, let’s look at three examples of love poems: “Ode to Dalya’s Bald Spot” by Angel Nafis, “February & my love is in another state” by Jose Olivarez, “Sonnet 43” by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. These can be found in the worksheet at the bottom of this lesson plan.

Prewriting 1

Read “Ode to Dalya’s Bald Spot”, “February & my love is in another state”, and “Sonnet 43.” Come up with a list of **two familiar images, themes, or metaphors** about love each poet uses and then a separate list of **two surprising images, themes, or metaphors** each poet uses to describe love in their poems. Then, answer the following questions:

- (1) Who is Dalya to Angel Nafis?
- (2) What kind of relationship does Jose Olivarez have with his “love”?
- (3) “Sonnet 43” is unique between these three poems because it uses (and names) a poetic form, the sonnet. What patterns can you see in “Sonnet 43” that are not present in the

other two poems? How does Elizabeth Barrett Browning use these rules and patterns to convey a similar message to the other two poets? How is it different?

(4) How does Elizabeth Barrett Browning get the point across that she loves the “thee” in “Sonnet 43”?

(5) What do you notice about how sadness/loneliness/ or other ‘unhappy’ feelings fit into these three love poems?

Prewriting 2

In these examples, we see love poems that are written for siblings, friends, girl/boy friends, partners, wives and husbands. But really, you could adapt any poetic form (odes, sonnets, free verse, etc) to write a nice poem for someone or something you love: a friend, a pet, a place, a game, *A TEACHER*, anything! Romantic love is far from the only kind of love! In the space below, take some pre-writing notes for a poem you’ll write on the back of the worksheet:

- (1) What form of poem will you write:
- (2) Who or what is your “Object of love” (person, friend, significant other, place, object, etc):
- (3) **Two similes** to describe your Object of Love:
- (4) **Two metaphors** to describe your Object of Love:
- (5) **One short description** of your Object of Love using **each of the five senses**:

Writing Prompt

Write a love poem based on the prewriting you did in Part 2 on the worksheet.

Share / Reflect

Record a video of your love poem and share it with someone, maybe even the person you wrote it for. How is your love poem different or similar to the examples we’ve looked at today?

Supplemental Materials

Poems

Check/Highlight all that apply

- Text by a contemporary/diverse author
- Translated text
- Visual Thinking Strategies
- Close reading or other analysis
- A step of the writing process
- Planning & Reflection Strategy
- New device, concept or theme
- Social-Emotional Learning
 - Self-Management
 - Social Awareness
 - Relationship Skills
 - Responsible-Decision Making
 - Self-Awareness

Ode to Dalya's Bald Spot

BY ANGEL NAFIS

my sister wraps the throw
around herself on the small
cream loveseat & i know
for sure that she is not
a speck of dirt on a pill.
she coughs & sniffs up all
the lucky air in the room
into her excellent nostrils,
which are endless
holy wells replenishing
the soft architecture of her guts.
not even the lupus can interrupt
this ritual of beholding.
you ever look at a thing
you ain't make, but become
a mother in the looking?
our blood is a thread tied
around my finger, tied
around her finger, that helps
me love. when her knees
swell, when her joints rust,
when her hair thins & flees
making a small continent
of skin on the side of her head,
i am witnessing her in whatever
state her body will allow.
Bismillah to the brain that
put my name next to her name
and said *look at this girl your
whole life and know some kind
of peace*. littlest bald spot, that no one
expected or knew how to love
you remind me of us.
i know Dalya's thinking, *how ugly
what a shame*, but i wanna
build a mosque right then
& there. make an annual
hajj to that brown meadow.
slick as a coin. little planet
uncolonized. flagless.

her awful, but her own.

February & my love is in another state

BY JOSÉ OLIVAREZ

so when i walk down the street, i hold hands
with the wind. there's a chimney coughing
up ahead & a sky so honey, i could almost taste it.
a cat struts away from me & two yellow eyes

become four: just like that,
i'm the loneliest creature on this block.
soon the streetlights will come alive
& television sets will light up with blues.

stay with me. while the sky is still golden,
hold the ladder so i can climb, & from
the highest rung, i can scrape away a drizzle
of light to wear around my neck. alone

is the star i follow. in love & in solitude:
alone is the home with the warmest glow.

Sonnet 43

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.

Epithalamion to Myself

BY TONY DEGENARO

Start the beginning: you were
born
and the world was made right.

Start with a metaphor: your eyes
 moons — I couldn't
possibly sleep under any other sky.

Start in the middle, the wretched
weather unraveling America:
we met in the Midwest & spent so
many years tracing our names
over its endless skies, in
Ohio I substituted a state
for your little arms and wrote
endless poems
about how much I missed Ohio, as if
 the state line
 traced your smile
 onto some map

 only I
 could read the compass of.

Start at the end — I was worried
I had to write the best poem
anybody ever wrote. No clichés,
no melodrama (get it, this is me
we're talking about). What can I
write in metaphor that I won't say in winks
and nods while you grow old, while
I grow old beside you, while a family
that bears significant resemblance to



the favorite pieces of you & I come
up out of the ground like a tree trunk
I scratched our names into the bark
of in a poem I wrote while I was
missing you to death. But now,
Rachel, I am so alive. You are
here. We are here. Start at
the end, which, curiously enough

is just the beginning.

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Worksheet:

Name: _____

Part One

Read “Ode to Dalya’s Bald Spot”, “February & my love is in another state”, and “Sonnet 43” by Angel Nafis & Jose Olivarez & Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In small groups, come up with a list of **two familiar images, themes, or metaphors** about love each poet uses and then a separate list of **two surprising images, themes, or metaphors** each poet uses about love in their poems. Then, answer the following questions:

- (6) Who is Dalya to Angel Nafis?

 - (7) What kind of relationship does Jose Olivarez have with his “love”?

 - (8) “Sonnet 43” is unique between these three poems because it uses (and names) a poetic form, the sonnet. What patterns can you see in “Sonnet 43” that are not present in the other two poems? How does Elizabeth Barrett Browning use these rules and patterns to convey a similar message to the other two poets? How is it different?

 - (9) How does Elizabeth Barrett Browning get the point across that she loves the “thee” in “Sonnet 43”?

 - (10) How does sadness/loneliness/other ‘unhappy’ feelings fit into these three love poems?
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Part Two

In these examples, we see love poems that are written for siblings, friends, girl/boy friends, partners, wives and husbands. But really, you could adapt any poetic form (odes, sonnets, free verse, etc) to write a nice poem for someone or something you love: a friend, a pet, a place, a game, *A TEACHER*, anything! Romantic love is far from the only kind of love! In the space below, take some pre-writing notes for a poem you'll write on the back of the worksheet:

- (6) What form will you write your poem in?

- (7) Object of love (person, friend, significant other, place, object, etc)

- (8) **Two similes** to describe your OOL:

- (9) **Two metaphors** to describe your OOL:

- (10) **One short description** of your OOL using **each of the five senses**:

Part Three

Using the space on this page, write a love poem!