

Exemplar Grade 9 Essay 2

Compare how poets present romantic love in 'Singh Song!' and in **one** other poem from 'Love and relationships'.

[30 MARKS]

PLAN

- Intro: Singh song presents romantic love to be unconditional and a key force in the speakers life, Farmer's bride presents it as irrelevant and a burden to the speaker
- Para 1: unconditional + prioritisation of love theme
- Para 2: language of love + structure
- Para 3: form + valuation of women in singh song + objectification of women farmers bride

Naljit Nagra, in his poem 'Singh Song!', shows love to be unconditional and to prevail over all obstacles, whether that be cultural or physical. Charlotte Mew, by contrast writes a poem where romantic love is not prioritised by the speaker and is viewed as a burden and as a result, neither the Farmer, nor his wife ends the poem contended.

Nagra creates a theme in his poem of unconditional love; Singh loves his wife despite her listed flaws. He recounts how she is constantly "effing at [his] mum", using a dialect that reflects his speaker's Indian accent. Nagra's speaker's tone has a colloquial feel, and he juxtaposes her rudeness, later in the poem, against his labelling of her as "priceless". His juxtaposition combined with the dialect has the effect that a conventionally unattractive trait his wife possesses, swearing at his mother, is rather portrayed to be endearing. The way the speaker talks of his wife's faults as though they are a charming quirk of her personality shows true romantic love to surmount any obstacles. Charlotte Mew's poem, on the contrary, shows romantic love to be an obligation for its speaker which is a theme that continues throughout the poem; he views it on the same level as he views his rural labour. The farmer recounts that he "chose a maid, too young maybe". The noun "maid" portrays his wife as young and childlike, making him seem predatorial. Moreover, the syntactical closeness of this line and the following one "more's to do at harvest than bide and woo", demonstrates that he views her as a responsibility, equal to that of his harvest related obligations. The rhyming couplet which Mew employs, combined with the monosyllabic nature of "maid" drives the metre and makes it seem as though the farmer is busy and will not dwell on his wife for more than one syllable. He overlooks his wife in favour of his occupation, unlike Singh who renounces his shop keeper duties to spend time with his beloved.

Furthermore, he actively prioritises his love for her over his occupational obligations and we can note this due to the language he uses. The speaker in Nagra's poem is shown to often abandon his duties as a shop keeper to make love to his wife and consequently, we can assume that he values romantic love over material and financial possessions. When the two sneak down to the shop late at night he "stare[s] past di half price window signs" to look at his "baby". His overlooking of the "half price" labels, acts as a metaphor for Singh's renunciation of material gains and by extension his prioritisation of his romantic love for his wife. The Phonetic transcription Nagra uses with "di" is symbolic. The speaker speaks in simple terms to reflect the simplicity of the love he feels for his wife. Nagra was interested in the way Indian accents were traditionally ridiculed in English media and writes his poem in the dialect to normalise the accent, showing that having an accent is a reality and not a joke for many British-Indian families. In fact, the accent used in Nagra's poem is, by contrast, a beautiful representation of the way in which love, a complex, nuanced emotion, can be effectively communicated in such minimalist terms. Love in 'The Farmer's Bride' almost seems like a perversion of the love in 'Singh Song!'. The speaker of Mew's poem objectifies his wife, likening her to an animal often with similes. He describes her as "like a hare" and "like a mouse". He zoomorphises her, comparing her to animals which are often prey and thus de-humanises her. Unlike Nagra's speaker who allows his wife to flourish as the independent woman she is, overlooking her potentially scheming activities "on di web" and when Nagra evokes a simile with "eyes ov a gun". Singh's simile empowers his innamorata, contrasting against the Farmer who's objectifies his wife. There is enjambement in both poems but in Nagra's it represents the endless nature of his love, whereas in Mew's it represents the endless nature of his isolation because of how he has treated his wife.

Indeed, the power dynamic in both poems is drastically different. Singh puts his wife on a pedestal, quite literally, describing her as “above [his] head”. At the end of the poem, he is the one who is sat on the “stool”. Their power dynamic is shown to be equal which continues throughout the poem and culminates in a happy ending for both of them. The farmer, on the other hand, has immense power at the beginning of the poem with his objectifying, domineering language, but at the end his power slips. His maid “sleeps up in the attic”, making herself absent to portrays herself as both literally and metaphorically above him. She reclaims her independence by isolating herself and thus the power dynamic shifts. Both poems make use of a monologue form but in Mew’s it is dramatic and suspenseful, whereas in Nagra’s the form is humorous and exciting. Mew’s was particularly interested in the subjugation of women in marital relationships, having watched many family members suffer serious mental health problems after being married. Thus it makes sense her speaker ends the poem, unlike Singh, unhappy and alone and this is shown to stem directly from his mistreatment of his wife.

Romantic love is shown by both poets to be essential for a happy and contented existence and both poets demonstrate that the proper valuation of women is essential for the growth of that romantic love. Nagra’s speaker’s love is unconditional and comes from a place of respect and thus he is bestowed with happiness. Mew’s speaker, by contrast, does not respect or value his wife and thus he is left bitter and alone.

