**A Contemplation Upon Flowers -**Literature Notes

**Please note that the information given on this poem is not meant to replace any material given in the classroom setting. It is a very BASIC guide to enable a literal understanding of the poem. Metaphorical interpretations should be sought in the classroom.**

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| **The physical structure of this poem has been altered from the original layout in the text.**  Brave flowers, 1.that I could 5.gallant it like you, and be as little vain; You come abroad and make a 6.harmless show, And to your beds of earth again; You are not proud, you know your birth, For your embroidered garments are from earth.  You do obey your months and times, but I would have it ever spring; My fate would know no winter, never die, nor think of such a thing; Oh that I could 2.my bed of earth but view,1.and smile and look as cheerfully as you.  Oh teach me to see death and not to fear,  But rather to take truce; 3.How often have I seen you at a 6.bier, And there look fresh and spruce; You fragrant flowers then 7.teach me that my breath like yours may sweeten and perfume my death. Berry, J. 'A Contemplation Upon Flowers' |  |

**This is the OPINION of one individual, which might not coincide with the views of others.**  
  
LITERAL MEANING  
The persona wishes that he could be as brave as the flowers, who know who they owe their life to - the earth. They know their place and obey the order, or cycle, of life and death. The persona wishes that he could be this way because he is the opposite, he wants to live forever. The persona wants the flowers to teach him NOT to fear death, but to accept it.



LITERARY DEVICES  
1. SIMILE

* Stanza 1, line: The persona is wishing that he could be as brave as the flower. This implies that the persona does not think that he is brave, but a coward in the face of death.
* Stanza 2, line 14: This is another comparison between the persona and the plant. The persona wishes that he could look death in the face and be cheerful, like the plant. Again, this emphasizes that he lacks.

2. EUPHEMISM  
This phrase is a replacement for the word death. It softens death and makes it appear welcoming and pleasant.  
  
3. IRONY  
It is ironic that the flowers look so fresh and alive when it is facing its very mortality, on the top of a casket. Death is a sad affair, and the flowers are at their best when ushering people back to the earth.  
4. PERSONIFICATION  
The persona is speaking directly to flowers and giving them human qualities, therefore, the whole poem is an example of the use of personification at it's best. He even goes as far as to ask the flower to teach him things that will make him be like it.  
  
IMPORTANT WORDS/ PHRASES  
5. 'galant'  
This word literally means brave or heroic. The word, however, also brings to mind adjectives such as charming and attentive, like a knight would be in olden days. So the plants are not simply brave in their acceptance of death, but they are also gracious.  
6. 'harmless show'  
The word harmless sticks out in this phrase because it implies that the flowers are demure and quiet in their beauty.  
7. 'bier'  
This is a movable frame on which a coffin or a corpse is placed before burial or cremation, or on which they are carried to the grave.  
8. 'teach me that my breath like yours may sweeten and perfume my death'  
This implies that if death is not feared, then the person will go into deaths arms joyfully, without any sorrow, remorse or bitterness.  
  
TONE  
The [tone](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is admiration, because the persona literally admires the flowers for its accepting attitude towards death.  
  
MOOD/ ATMOSPHERE  
The [mood](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html), or atmosphere of the poem is a pensive one. The persona is thinking about death, how he relates to it versus how others relate to it.   
  
CONTRAST  
A contrast in this poem is the persona's fear of death, versus the flowers ‘acceptance of it