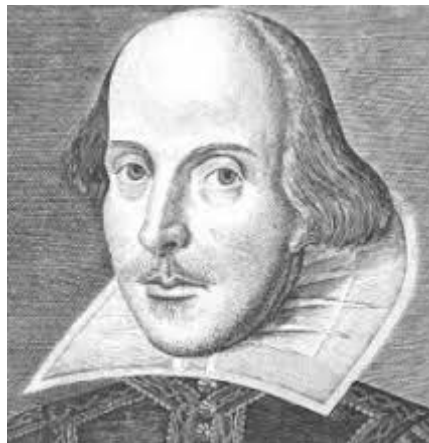


**Anne Hathaway**  
**By Carol Ann Duffy**



## Background and Narrative Voice

Anne Hathaway was married to William Shakespeare. When Shakespeare died, despite being wealthy, all he left her in his will was his 'second best bed'. Many people thought this was very mean of Shakespeare but Duffy sees this differently. A person's best bed would have been kept for guests to their house. Therefore, Duffy sees this bequest as an affirmation of their love.

## Form

*Anne Hathaway* is a **sonnet** spoken in the voice of Anne Hathaway. Because Duffy imagines the speaker as one distinct character, we can call this poem a **dramatic monologue**.

## The sonnet form

A **sonnet** is a fourteen-line lyric poem, traditionally written in **iambic pentameter** — that is, in lines ten syllables long, with accents falling on every second syllable, as in:

“Shall *I* compare thee to a summer's day?”

The sonnet form first became popular during the Italian Renaissance, when the poet Petrarch published a sequence of love sonnets addressed to an idealised woman named Laura. Taking firm hold among Italian poets, the sonnet spread throughout Europe to England.

In Elizabethan England the sonnet was the form of choice for lyric poets, particularly lyric poets seeking to engage with traditional themes of love and romance. Today, the sonnet remains the most influential and important verse form in the history of English poetry.

Two kinds of sonnets have been most common in English poetry, and they take their names from the greatest poets to utilize them: the **Petrarchan sonnet** and the **Shakespearean sonnet**.

The Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two main parts, called the **octave** and the **sestet**. The octave is eight lines long, and typically follows a rhyme scheme of ABBAABBA, or ABBACDDC. The sestet occupies the remaining six lines of the poem, and typically follows a rhyme scheme of CDCDCD, or CDECDE. The octave and the sestet are usually contrasted in some key way: for example, the octave may ask a question to which the sestet offers an answer.

The Shakespearean sonnet is divided into four parts. The first three parts are each four lines long, and are known as quatrains, rhymed ABAB; the fourth part is called the couplet, and is rhymed CC. The Shakespearean sonnet is often used to develop a sequence of metaphors or ideas, one in each quatrain, while the couplet offers either a summary or a new take on the preceding images or ideas.

In Shakespeare's Sonnet 147, for instance, the speaker's love is compared to a disease. In the first quatrain, the speaker characterizes the disease:

My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease,  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.

In the second, he explores the idea that all reason has left him because he is in love:

My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I desp'rate now approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except.

In the third, he describes the consequences of his abandonment of reason:

Past cure am I, now reason is past care,  
And frantic mad with evermore unrest,  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
At random from the truth vainly expressed;

And in the couplet, he explains the source of his mad, diseased love—his lover's betrayal of his faith

For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

### **Anne Hathaway as a sonnet**

The poem is a sonnet in that it follows the most basic sonnet rule - it has fourteen lines. However, it also breaks a lot of rules. It has no formal rhyme scheme and its meter isn't always exactly iambic pentameter.

### **Why does the speaker (Hathaway) choose to narrate her thoughts in the form of a sonnet?**

- Perhaps as a **tribute** to her lost husband who devoted his life to producing sonnets and poetry?
- To **represent her love** for him? Remember that the sonnet is often associated with the theme of love.
- To help create a realistic speaking voice? The rhythm involved in **iambic pentameter** is often said to mimic natural speaking voice.
- Perhaps the fact that it is not a perfect sonnet is a tribute in itself. It is as if Hathaway is saying to her late husband that only he is capable of creating a perfect sonnet.

### **Theme**

The main themes/ ideas in the poem are:

- **Love**
- **Loss/ Death**
- **Literature/ Writing**

## Anne Hathaway

*'Item I gyve unto my wief my second best bed...'*

(from Shakespeare's will)

The bed we loved in was a spinning world  
of forests, castles, torchlight, cliff-tops, seas  
where he would dive for pearls. My lover's words  
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses  
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme  
to his, now echo, assonance; his touch  
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.

Some nights I dreamed he'd written me, the bed  
a page beneath his writer's hands. Romance  
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste.  
In the other bed, the best, our guests dozed on,  
dribbling their prose. My living laughing love –  
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head  
as he held me upon that next best bed.

### Questions

1. (a) The poem is about Anne Hathaway's relationship with Shakespeare. Explain fully what impression is given of their relationship together in the first four lines of the poem? ("*Item / gyve...dive for pearls*") (2)  
  
(b) Explain how **one** example of Duffy's language helps create this impression. (2)
2. How does Duffy's use of imagery **and** sound emphasise the couples' closeness in lines 4 – 8? ("*My lover's...centre of a noun*") (4)
3. Show how Duffy goes on to use the idea of literature to convey Hathaway's relationship in lines 9 – 11. (2)
4. With close reference to Duffy's language, explain the contrast Duffy creates in lines 12 and 13. ("*In the other bed...laughing love*") (2)
5. Duffy often deals with the idea of relationships in her poetry. Refer briefly to the central relationship in this poem and go on to discuss a central relationship in **at least one** other poem by Carol Ann Duffy (8)

## The last question – How to answer it!

### Question

Duffy often deals with the idea of relationships in her poetry. Refer briefly to the central relationship in 'Anne Hathaway' and go on to discuss a central relationship in **at least one other poem by Carol Ann Duffy (8)**

1. Start by referring to the central relationship in 'Anne Hathaway'. **Identify** and **analyse** the techniques that Duffy uses to highlight the positive aspects of that relationship.

*Duffy uses a metaphor comparing Hathaway and Shakespeare's bed to a place where they "would dive for pearls." (1)*

*As well as this image suggesting the sexual intimacy of their relationship, the word "pearls" implies that their relationship and intimacy was precious and valuable to them both. (1)*

2. Now go on to think about the way in which Duffy deals with relationships in the other poems that we have read so far. Explain which poems you are focusing on and identify how Duffy deals with the central relationship in the poem you have chose. Again, you will need to **identify** and **analyse** the techniques that Duffy uses to explore the central relationship

*In the poem 'Havisham' Duffy explores the conflicting emotions a person can feel in a relationship when she uses the oxymoron "Beloved, sweetheart bastard" (1)*

*The word 'Beloved' and 'sweetheart' imply the passion and closeness that can be felt in a relationship. The shocking use of the expletive "bastard" implies the bitterness and hatred that can be felt after a relationship has ended. (1)*

*In Duffy's poem, 'Valentine,' the speaker uses a metaphor to compare their love and relationship to an onion. Like the pale insides of an onion their relationship "promises light". (1)*

*This words "promise" and "light" suggests the hopefulness and optimism felt at the start of a relationship. (1)*

*Later in "Valentine" the speaker extends this metaphor to show the negative side to relationships. Like an onion, relationships "will blind you with tears." (1)*

*The words "tears" implies the pain a relationship can bring. The word "blind" implies that relationships cause us to be short sighted about other things in our lives. (1)*