How Do I Love Thee
by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

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 everyday'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 a 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.

Bilingual Love Poem
by José Antonio Burciaga (1940-1996)

Your sonrisa is a sunrise
that was reaped
from your smile
sewed like a semilla
into the sol
of my soul
with an ardent pasion,
passion ardiente,
sizzling in a mar de amar
where more is amor,
in a sea of si
filled with the sal of salt
in the saliva of the saliva
that gives sed
but is never sad.

Love is
by Nikki Giovanni (1943- )

Some people forget that love is
tucking you in and kissing you “Good night”
no matter how young or old you are

Some people don’t remember that love is
listening and laughing and asking questions
no matter what your age

Few recognize that love is
commitment responsibility no fun at all unless

Love is
You and me

Poema de amor bilingue
by José Antonio Burciaga (1940-1996)

Tu sonrisa es un sunrise
cosechada
de tu smile
sembrada como una semilla
dentro del sol
de mi soul
con una ardent pasion
passion ardiente
chisporroteando en un mar de amar
donde more es amor
en un sea de si
llena con a sal de salt
en la saliva de saliva
que da sed
pero jamas esta sad.
Dos lenguas que se encuentran
no es un beso de boca
sino amor bilingue.

Theory
by Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)

Into love and out again,
Thus I went, and thus I go
Spare your voice, and hold your pen—
Well and bitterly I know
All the songs were ever sung,
All the words were ever said;
Could it be, when I was young,
Someone dropped me on my head?

One Perfect Rose
by Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)

A single flow'r he sent me, since we met.
All tenderly his messenger he chose;
Deep-hearted, pure, with scented dew still wet—
One perfect rose.

I knew the language of the floweret;
'My fragile leaves,' it said, 'his heart enclose.'
Love long has taken for his amulet
One perfect rose.

Why is it no one ever sent me yet
One perfect limousine, do you suppose?
Ah no, it's always just my luck to get
One perfect rose.
Valentine’s Day Poetry (2013)

XVIII
by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

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:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest 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.

My First Kiss: My First Love Tragedy

It wasn't so much of a kiss as it was my first love tragedy;
I was twelve and innocent and although I had spent
the requisite amount of time kissing my hand
(the way early 90’s television had taught me I should)
I knew nothing could more prepare me for a second kiss
than a first, so there we stood within
the dark corner of our school’s gymnasium.
Only the two of us.

With her parents parked around the front
we hoped to steal a quick labial embrace,
but as we neared I thought of her
and then her braces
remembering how much
Andy said that they could hurt
and so, determined to be careful,
I leaned in with a peck
while she anticipated my French heritage
be a sign of the way I would operate.

Feeling her warm tongue on my lips
I, in a second’s time, realized I had mistakenly kept
my mouth shut as she opened hers to welcome me,
but before I had the opportunity
to part my lips and engage
in true reciprocity her lips had left mine.
my eyes opened to find her
metal-braced smile wishing me a goodnight.

As she went off to her parents
I returned to my friends
proud as a Spanish conquistador returning to his Queen
with his ship’s belly full of gold,
to discuss glowingly all of the spoils I had seized
the adventures encountered and natives killed,
even though my pockets empty, my heart deflated and
my lips left salty with only the promise of a high seas adventure set to discover uncharted territory.

Fire Roses
by Cynthia Fuller (b. 1948)

Today you grasped
the stars as
they were slipping off
the edge of my horizon
and shook them back
into the sky.

You are
quicksilver
can leave me
slow-footed
wordless.

My skin is alive
with the soft imprint
of your mouth.
How many miracles
can there be?

As I burnt your letters
the pages spread and curled
bloomed
like fire roses.

For You
(My Red, Red Love)

In a café I watch
A man Awkwardly
reach across the table For the hand of a woman, Which she
hesitantly gives;
With the other hand she pushes A strand of hair from her Face; she allows a flash of a smile To escape her red,
Red lips They don’t talk aloud. Instead they look And their eye empty The contents of their souls into The space between them.
He gathers the everything from the table And repeatedly folds it In upon itself Until there is not a his and a hers, but a theirs.
I watch. After the molding and shaping the resulting red,
Red body begins to pulsate and change—First a rose
then a heart Then a home and then a heart Then a baby and then a heart. The form keeps pulsing and Changing and Pulsing and Changing
(I see their whole Life unfold), but it always returns to a heart—Their heart. It always returns To their heart. It is then I find I love you In a way I never knew
Before.
Lunchbox Love Note  
*by Kenn Nesbitt*

Inside my lunch  
to my surprise  
a perfect heart-shaped  
love note lies.

The outside says,  
“Will you be mine?”  
and, “Will you be  
my valentine?”

I take it out  
and wonder who  
would want to tell me  
“I love you.”

Perhaps a girl  
who’s much too shy  
to hand it to me  
eye to eye.

Or maybe it  
was sweetly penned  
in private by  
a secret friend

Who found my lunchbox  
sitting by  
and slid the note in  
on the sly.

Oh, I’d be thrilled  
if it were Jo,  
the cute one in  
the second row.

Or could it be  
from Jennifer?  
Has she found out  
I’m sweet on her?

My mind’s abuzz,  
my shoulders tense.  
I need no more  
of this suspense.

My stomach lurching  
in my throat,  
I open up  
my little note.

Then wham! as if  
it were a bomb,  
inside it reads,  
“I love you—Mom.”

A Red, Red Rose  
*by Robert Burns*

O my Luve is like a red, red rose  
That’s newly sprung in June;  
O my Luve is like the melody  
That’s sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luve am I;  
And I will luve thee still, my dear,  
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun;  
I will love thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o’ life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!  
And fare thee weeel awhile!  
And I will come again, my luve,  
Though it were ten thousand mile.

Song: To Celia  
*by Ben Jonson*

Come, my Celia, let us prove,  
While we can, the sports of love;  
Time will not be ours forever;  
He at length our good will sever.

Spend not then his gifts in vain.  
Suns that set may rise again;  
But if once we lose this light,  
’Tis with us perpetual night.

Why should we defer our joys?  
Fame and rumor are but toys.

Cannot we delude the eyes  
Of a few poor household spies,  
Or his easier ears beguile,  
So removed by our wile?

’Tis no sin love’s fruit to steal;  
But the sweet thefts to reveal,  
To be taken, to be seen,  
These have crimes accounted been.

Valentine  
*by Tom Pickard*

simplicity  
say sleep  
or shall we  
shower  
have an apple  
you are  
as I need  
water  
shall I move?  
do you dream?  
shallow snow  
flesh  
melt this
"I loved you first: but afterwards your love"
by Christina Rossetti

I loved you first: but afterwards your love
Outsoaring mine, sang such a loftier song
As drowned the friendly cooings of my dove.
Which owes the other most? my love was long,
And yours one moment seemed to wax more strong;
I loved and guessed at you, you construed me
And loved me for what might or might not be –
Nay, weights and measures do us both a wrong.

For verily love knows not ‘mine’ or ‘thine;’
With separate ‘I’ and ‘thou’ free love has done,
For one is both and both are one in love:
Rich love knows nought of ‘thine that is not mine;’
Both have the strength and both the length thereof,
Both of us, of the love which makes us one.

Poem for My Love
by June Jordan

How do we come to be here next to each other
in the night
Where are the stars that show us to our love
inevitable
Outside the leaves flame usual in darkness
and the rain
falls cool and blessed on the holy flesh
the black men waiting on the corner for
a womanly mirage
I am amazed by peace
It is this possibility of you
asleep
and breathing in the quiet air

First Poem for You
by Kim Addonizio

I like to touch your tattoos in complete
darkness, when I can’t see them. I’m sure of
where they are, know by heart the neat
lines of lightning pulsing just above
your nipple, can find, as if by instinct, the blue
swirls of water on your shoulder where a serpent
twists, facing a dragon. When I pull you
to me, taking you until we’re spent
and quiet on the sheets, I love to kiss
the pictures in your skin. They’ll last until
you’re seared to ashes; whatever persists
or turns to pain between us, they will still
be there. Such permanence is terrifying.
So I touch them in the dark; but touch them, trying.

Romantic Moment
by Tony Hoagland

After the nature documentary we walk down,
into the plaza of art galleries and high end clothing stores
where the mock orange is fragrant in the summer night
and the smooth adobe walls glow fleshlike in the dark.

It is just our second date, and we sit down on a rock,
holding hands, not looking at each other,

and if I were a bull penguin right now I would lean over
and vomit softly into the mouth of my beloved

and if I were a peacock I’d flex my gluteal muscles to
erect and spread the quills of my cinemax tail.

If she were a female walkingstick bug she might
insert her hypodermic proboscis delicately into my neck

and inject me with a rich hormonal sedative
before attaching her egg sac to my thoracic undercarriage,

and if I were a young chimpanzee I would break off a nearby
treelimb
and smash all the windows in the plaza jewelry stores.

And if she was a Brazilian leopardfrog she would wrap her
impressive
tongue three times around my right thigh and

pummel me lightly against the surface of our pond
and I would know her feelings were sincere.

Instead we sit awhile in silence, until
she remarks that in the relative context of tortoises and iguanas,
human males seem to be actually rather expressive.
And I say that female crocodiles really don’t receive

enough credit for their gentleness.
Then she suggests that it is time for us to go
to get some ice cream cones and eat them.

[love is more thicker than forget]
by E. E. Cummings

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
and less it shall une
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
and more it cannot die
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky