

جامعة تكريت
كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية
قسم اللغة الانكليزية



المرحلة: الأولى

Subject Name: Intoduction to liteature

Lecture: *"To—" by Percy Bysshe Shelley*

Full name: Dr. Dheyaa R. Alwan

Tenth lecture

“To—” by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Introduction

Good morning, dear students. Today, we will study a beautiful poem titled “To—” by Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the greatest Romantic poets. The poem is brief yet profound, capturing themes of love, beauty, and the passage of time. It is an excellent example of Shelley’s lyrical style and his deep emotions. Let us explore the poem’s meaning, themes, and literary devices in a simple and academic way.

1 .Background on Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was a key figure in the Romantic movement.

He is known for his lyrical poetry and political themes.

Shelley’s works often explore nature, love, freedom, and human emotion.

Despite his short life, his poetry continues to inspire readers around the world.

2 .The Poem Text: “To”—

Here is the poem:

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it;
One feeling too falsely disdain’d
For thee to disdain it.
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not—,
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

3 .Summary of the Poem

The poem reflects Shelley's deep and complex feelings for a loved one. He describes a pure, spiritual kind of love that goes beyond physical attraction or societal expectations. He offers his "worship" and devotion, comparing his feelings to universal, unreachable desires like a moth's longing for the star or the night yearning for the dawn.

4 .Themes in the Poem

1 .Pure and Spiritual Love

Shelley rejects shallow definitions of love, offering a profound and eternal devotion instead.

2 .Longing and Aspiration

The poem captures the human desire for something unattainable, symbolized by the moth and the star.

3 .Beauty and Transcendence

Shelley's love is portrayed as something sacred and beyond earthly concerns.

4 .Rejection of Conventional Love

The poet distinguishes his feelings from what society might define as love, emphasizing individuality and depth.

5 .Structure and Form

The poem is written in two stanzas, each consisting of eight lines.

The rhyme scheme is ABABCD CD, giving the poem a musical and lyrical quality.

The tone is reflective, passionate, and slightly melancholic.

6 .Literary Devices in the Poem

1 .Imagery

Shelley uses vivid imagery to convey his emotions, such as “the desire of the moth for the star”.

2 .Symbolism

The moth and the star: Represents unattainable aspirations and pure longing.

The night and the morrow: Symbolizes hope and renewal.

3 .Alliteration

Repeated consonant sounds enhance the poem’s rhythm, such as “pity from thee more dear”.

4 .Contrast

The poet contrasts superficial love with the profound worship he offers.

5 .Metaphor

Shelley uses metaphors like “the devotion to something afar” to describe his elevated feelings.

7 .Analysis of Key Lines

“One word is too often profaned / For me to profane it”

The poet suggests that the word “love” is misused and cheapened, so he refrains from using it to describe his own deep emotions.

“The desire of the moth for the star”

This metaphor captures the intensity and impossibility of the poet’s longing. The moth represents fragile beauty, while the star symbolizes a distant ideal.

“The devotion to something afar / From the sphere of our sorrow”

Shelley describes his feelings as transcendent, reaching beyond the hardships and limitations of earthly life.

8 .Why is “To—” Important?

Universal Themes: The poem explores love and longing, themes that resonate across time and cultures.

Romantic Ideals: It reflects the Romantic era’s focus on emotion, beauty, and the sublime.

Timeless Language: Shelley’s lyrical style and vivid imagery make the poem memorable and impactful.

9 .Discussion Questions

- 1 .Why does Shelley reject the conventional definition of love?
- 2 .What do the metaphors of the moth and the star, and the night and the morrow, symbolize in the poem?
- 3 .How does Shelley’s tone reflect the depth of his emotions?

10 .Activity

Write a short poem or paragraph about something you long for but cannot attain. Use metaphors or symbols to express your feelings.

Example:

<A bird trapped in a gilded cage,
Singing to the endless sky.
The wind whispers promises of freedom,
Yet the bars remain unbroken.

Conclusion

“To—” by Percy Bysshe Shelley is a heartfelt and philosophical exploration of love, longing, and the human spirit. Through vivid imagery and timeless language, Shelley expresses emotions that transcend physical boundaries and societal norms. The poem reminds us of the power and beauty of pure devotion, even in the face of impossibility.

Thank you for listening, and I hope this poem inspires you to think deeply about the nature of love and longing. See you in the next class