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English 2 / Period 12

Poetry Analysis – “O My Love...” by Robert Burns

A pervasive theme in the poem is that love is a struggle between the temporary emotions and eternal nature. Symbolism is one literary device used to highlight this theme. Throughout the poem, the rose is symbolic of the speaker's love for his subject. It creates a stronger image than just stating that the speaker really likes the subject. Another device used to reinforce the theme is simile. This is contained in the line “O my luv is like a red, red rose” (Burns 1). By comparing love to a rose, the image of the beauty of love is reinforced but the speaker also begins to hint at the temporariness of love. He continues his use of simile in the next line when love is compared to a melody (Burns 3). The speaker employs hyperbole to reinforce how strongly he feels about his love despite it possibly being temporary: “And I will love thee still, my dear,/ Till a' the seas gang dry” (Burns 8). The image of the seas going dry is repeated in the following line and a second hyperbole is added by stating he will love her until “the rocks melt wi' the sun” (Burns 10). The rhyme and meter of the poem add to the lyric verse which adds to the love song mood of the poem. The affectionate tone and use of symbolism, simile, and hyperbole speaks to the theme of temporary but everlasting love.