

## Fin de Fete Charlotte Mew

This is a strange little poem that impressed Thomas Hardy, no less. Perhaps because it chimed with the mood of a number of his love poems: somewhat melancholic, often unfulfilled. Mew's poem, though, is enigmatic. The couple have had a pleasant day together and now it's time to go home and therefore time to part. It's hardly a tragedy, yet lovers do find it hard to part even if they will meet again quite soon.



One way for students to get into the poem is to imagine the other partner. How will they be reacting? Ask students to intersperse the speaker's lines with words from an imagined partner. Here's an example of how it might play out:

Sweetheart, for such a day  
One mustn't grudge the score

Why, no indeed, I don't regret a moment...

Here, then, it's all to pay,  
It's Good-night at the door.

Must we say Good-night yet?  
It's early still. The sun is not yet set.

Good-night and good dreams to you,—

Ah, you are always sensible – and kind  
But -

Do you remember the picture-book thieves  
Who left two children sleeping in a wood the long night through?

Yes, I think I do...but, why...?

And how the birds came down and covered them with leaves?  
So you and I should have slept...

It would have been cold, my love, and uncomfortable.

But now,

But now, we're here at your front door  
Not in a fairy tale forest.  
And you must go in and rest your weary head.

Oh, what a lonely head!

Both our heads and hearts will be lonely tonight.  
Will you think of me in my room ?  
Or perhaps you will imagine me  
Lying in the wood under some leaves!

With just the shadow of a waving bough  
In the moonlight over your bed!

Goodnight, my love, until tomorrow...

The mood of the poem can easily be altered from melancholy to light-hearted. Try adding some stage directions (perhaps prior to a recording of the conversation):

(Smiling) Oh, what a lonely head!

(Laughing) With just the shadow of a waving bough in the moonlight over your bed!

In addition to being, hopefully, a fun exercise, the varying dialogues created by students will show that the poem does not have one definite interpretation and any response will have to include a 'maybe', 'perhaps' or similar equivocations.

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