

Name: _____

Class: _____

what love isn't

By Yrsa Daley-Ward

2014

Yrsa Daley-Ward is a spoken word poet, self-published author, and actress of Jamaican and Nigerian heritage. In this poem, Ward uses figurative language to explore what love is and is not. As you read, take note of how the poet uses figurative language to describe love and the effect it has on the overall theme.

- [1] It is not a five star stay. It is not
compliments and it is never ever
flattery.
It is solid. Not sweet but always
- [5] nutritious
always herb, always salt. Sometimes
grit.¹
It is now and till the end. It is never a
slither, never a little
- [10] it is a full serving
it is much
too much and real
never pretty or clean. It stinks — you can
smell it coming
- [15] it is weight
it is weight and it is too heavy to feel
good sometimes. It is discomfort — it is
not what the films say. Only songs
get it right
- [20] it is irregular
it is difficult
and always, always
surprising.



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1. a hard, sharp granule

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the central theme of the poem?
 - A. Love causes more problems than it is worth.
 - B. Love is a disaster when it is not perfect.
 - C. Love can be difficult in unexpected ways.
 - D. Love is not as difficult as media portrays it.

2. PART B: Which section from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Not sweet but always / nutritious / always herb, always salt." (Lines 3-6)
 - B. "never pretty or clean. It stinks — you can / smell it coming" (Lines 13-14)
 - C. "it is / not what the films say. Only songs / get it right" (Lines 17-19)
 - D. "it is irregular / it is difficult / and always, always / surprising." (Lines 20-23)

3. PART A: Which of the following identifies the tone of the poem?
 - A. honest
 - B. pessimistic
 - C. mournful
 - D. affectionate

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "always herb, always salt." (Line 6)
 - B. "It is now and till the end. It is never a / slither" (Lines 8-9)
 - C. "It is discomfort — it is / not what the films say." (Lines 17-18)
 - D. "Only songs / get it right" (Lines 18-19)

5. How does the poet's reference to the portrayal of love in films and songs contribute to the poem's meaning (Lines 17-19)?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. How is love often portrayed in the media? Is this an accurate representation of love? Why or why not?
2. In the context of the text, how does love emerge? How is love portrayed as developing in the poem? Is it easy? What does it take to succeed in love? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.