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Elizabeth Barrett Browning's (1806-61) "How Do I Love Thee?" (1850) is a heartfelt sonnet. The speaker expresses deep and powerful love. She explores how love can grow and last forever. Each line reflects a new way to love. The poem shows how love is pure, strong, and eternal.

Ways of Loving

Browning identifies seven ways of loving. They are,

Limitless Love: The speaker loves the depth, breadth, and height her soul can reach. This shows her love is vast and boundless. It is beyond physical limits and reaches her spirit.

Everyday Love: She loves through simple, daily moments. Her love is constant, shining both during the day and at night, by sun and candlelight. It fulfills quiet, everyday needs. The poet says,

"I love thee to the level of every day's

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light."

Free Love:

Her love is free and natural. It is like how people freely seek for justice and truth. This shows her love is not forced but willingly given.

Pure Love: She loves with purity. It is unselfish, without seeking praise or rewards. This shows her sincerity and honesty regarding her feelings.

Passionate Love: She loves with the same passion she had in her past struggles. This includes the deep emotions she once used for grief and faith. Her love is intense and emotional.

Faithful Love: The speaker loves with her childhood faith. She trusts love like she once trusted her saints. This shows her love is loyal and full of hope.

Eternal Love: She promises to love even after death. If God allows, her love will grow stronger beyond life. The poet says,

"I shall but love thee better after death."

This reflects the everlasting nature of her feelings.

The speaker identifies love as infinite, pure, and eternal. Each way reveals the depth of her passion. The poem beautifully shows love's power and timelessness.

LxNotes