

To His Coy Mistress Summary

Writer: Andrew Marvell | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Andrew Marvell's poem "*To His Coy Mistress*" is a "carpe diem" poem. Here, the speaker tries to convince his beloved to stop being shy and enjoy love before time runs out.

Part 1: If There Were Enough Time

In the first part, the speaker says that if they had unlimited time and space in the world, his beloved's shyness (or "coyness") would not be a problem. They could sit together, take their time, and enjoy each day of their love slowly and peacefully.

He imagines the lady walking beside the Ganges River in India, searching for rubies, while he waits near the Humber River in England. He is singing about his love for her. He says he would start loving her even before the great flood from the Bible. If they had enough time, she could show shyness to his love until the end of the world.

The speaker then says his love would grow slowly like a plant/garden and become bigger than empires. He would spend a hundred years admiring her eyes and forehead. He would spend two hundred years admiring each of her breasts. Finally, he would spend an age admiring her heart. He says that she truly deserves such deep and patient love.

Part 2: But Time is Running Out

In the second part, the speaker becomes serious. He says that he can always hear time chasing them like a fast-moving chariot. Ahead of them lies only death—like a huge, empty desert.

The speaker warns that in the future, when she is dead, her beauty will be gone. Her body will lie silent in the marble tomb, and no love songs will be sung there. After death, worms will touch the body that she had kept pure for so long. Her honour will turn to dust, and his passion will turn to ashes. He adds that the grave may be quiet and private, but no one makes love there.

Part 3: So Let Us Love Now

In the final part, the speaker urges the lady to enjoy love. He tells her to enjoy love while she is still young and beautiful, like fresh morning dew on her skin. Her soul is now full of warmth and desire. So, this is the best time for them to enjoy life and love.

He tells her that they should act like passionate birds of prey and enjoy every moment quickly. They should not let time slowly destroy their youth. They should gather all their energy and sweetness to love each other. He says they should break through the hard barriers of life and enjoy pleasure fully. The speaker ends by saying that they cannot stop the sun or time from moving, but by living and loving with passion, they can make time their own.

LxNotes