

ASM TUITION ACADEMY

1ST DATE ___ SHE, 1ST DATE ___ HE

First Date - She

I said I liked classical music.
It wasn't exactly a lie.
I hoped he would get the impression
That my brow was acceptably high.
I said I liked classical music.
I mentioned Vivaldi and Bach.
And he asked me along to this concert.
Here we are, sitting in the half-dark.

I was thrilled to be invited to the concert.
I couldn't care less what they play.
But I'm trying to look as if I'm
Focusing hard on the music today.
So I had a look at the programme
Noticed a piece by Strauss.
And I decided to sit there and concentrate
On his hands as they move on his trousers.

First Date - He

She said she liked classical music.
It wasn't exactly a lie.
She's got lovely eyes, and she's clever.
She also seemed keen on Vivaldi.
She said she liked classical music,
If it's really her sort of thing.
And I couldn't ask for anything better
Then to sit with her tonight in the ring.

I was thrilled to be invited to the concert.
I couldn't care less what they play.
I'm listening hard to the music,
But her profile's all I can survey.
I glanced at her looking at the programme.
There's something that I'm dying to know:
Was she interested in me, I wonder?
And is this a good start to our show?

Context:

Wendy Cope is a contemporary British poet known for her witty and humorous poetry that often focuses on modern relationships, emotions, and social dynamics. In "**First Date - She**" and "**First Date - He**," Cope explores the thoughts of two individuals on a first date at a classical music concert. The poems are written in a pair, with each poem giving the perspective of one half of the couple, showing the disparity between what they are thinking and how they are presenting themselves. The poems reflect the awkwardness and anxiety that can accompany early stages of dating, where both individuals are trying to impress each other and are unsure of how the other feels.

Themes:

1. **Anxiety and Self-Consciousness:** Both speakers are nervous and self-conscious throughout the date, concerned more with how they are perceived by the other than with the actual concert they are attending. They try to maintain appearances, creating a humorous tension between their internal thoughts and outward actions. This captures the insecurity that often accompanies first dates or new relationships.
 2. **Miscommunication and Perception:** There is a clear disconnect between the two characters in terms of their true feelings and what they assume about each other. Both are preoccupied with how they are perceived, and neither is paying full attention to the music. This miscommunication is subtle and adds a lighthearted, comedic element to the poems. The theme of **perception versus reality** is central, as both characters believe they are doing well at hiding their nerves and lack of interest in the music.
 3. **Expectations in Romance:** Both characters want the date to go well and have certain expectations about how it should unfold. Their inner monologues reveal their hopes and uncertainties about romantic connection. The theme of **romantic expectations** is explored through their contrasting views of the situation, and this contrast highlights the universal experience of overthinking during a first date.
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Poetic Devices:

1. **Dramatic Irony:** A key device in both poems is dramatic irony, where the audience is aware of both perspectives, but the characters are not. The humour arises from the fact that both characters are making assumptions about each other while they are unaware of how similarly they feel. For example, both are more interested in each other than the concert, but neither knows this about the other.
2. **Repetition:** Both poems feature the repetition of certain phrases for humorous effect. For example, in "**First Date - She**," the line "**I said I liked classical music**" is repeated, underscoring the speaker's concern with keeping up appearances. In "**First Date - He**," a similar repetition of "**She said she liked classical music**" shows that he, too, is focused on maintaining the impression of compatibility.
3. **Rhyme Scheme:** Both poems follow a simple and consistent **ABCB rhyme scheme**, which gives the poems a light and conversational rhythm. The structured rhyme mirrors the internal control both characters are trying to maintain over their emotions, while the humorous and relatable content contrasts with the orderly form.
4. **Internal Monologue:** The entire structure of each poem is based on internal monologue, offering insight into the characters' private thoughts. This allows readers

to see the contrast between what they are thinking and how they are presenting themselves. The use of monologue highlights the vulnerability of each character, making their nervousness and desire to impress both endearing and relatable.

5. **Humour and Wit:** Wendy Cope is known for her use of humour in poetry, and these poems are a perfect example. The humour comes from the exaggerated focus on trivial details and the gap between inner feelings and outward behaviour. For instance, in "**First Date - She,**" the line about concentrating on "**his hands as they move on his trousers**" introduces a moment of nervous distraction, making the poem feel charming and realistic.
6. **Colloquial Language:** The language used in both poems is conversational and accessible, which helps to create a connection with the reader. This informal tone makes the characters' thoughts feel more authentic and relatable, adding to the humour and simplicity of the situation.
7. **Parallel Structure:** The poems are structured in a parallel manner, with both characters' thoughts following a similar pattern. This structural parallelism heightens the contrast between their inner feelings and outward expressions, while also drawing attention to how alike they are in their anxiety and awkwardness.
8. **Contrast:** There is a contrast between the highbrow setting of a classical music concert and the everyday concerns of the characters. The characters are at a formal event, but their thoughts are trivial and focused on their romantic concerns rather than the music itself. This contrast between the setting and their inner dialogues adds humour to the situation.

COMPARISON WITH, **MY LAST DUTCHES** **I WANNA BE YOURS**

1. Themes:

- **Love and Relationships:**
 - **"First Date - She"/"First Date - He":**

The theme of romantic **expectations** and **nervousness** is central in Cope's poems. Both characters are preoccupied with how they appear to each other, focusing on the early stages of attraction and connection. The uncertainty of a new relationship is explored humorously, with both speakers unsure about what the other truly feels.
 - **"I Wanna Be Yours"** (John Cooper Clarke):

This poem is a declaration of unconditional love. The speaker expresses a desire to be everything for their beloved in the simplest, most accessible terms. The love presented is selfless, as the speaker compares themselves to everyday objects (a vacuum cleaner, a coffee pot) to show their desire to serve and care for their partner.
 - **"My Last Duchess"** (Robert Browning):

The theme of **possessive love and power** dominates Browning's poem. The Duke's monologue reveals his controlling nature and the power dynamics within his previous relationship, where he viewed his wife as a possession.

The poem explores darker aspects of love, such as jealousy, dominance, and the objectification of the partner.

- **Emotional Vulnerability vs. Power:**
 - **"First Date - She"/"First Date - He":**
Both speakers are vulnerable, filled with self-consciousness and anxiety about how they are perceived. The poems emphasize emotional insecurity, as both characters are eager for connection but uncertain about the other's feelings.
 - **"I Wanna Be Yours":**
The speaker is **emotionally open** and **vulnerable** in their devotion. They offer themselves entirely, with a willingness to be anything the partner needs, which shows a level of selflessness and surrender in the context of love.
 - **"My Last Duchess":**
In stark contrast, **"My Last Duchess"** presents a character who is emotionally closed off and controlling. The Duke's treatment of his wife as a mere object of beauty, coupled with his jealousy and eventual disposal of her, shows the dangerous side of power in relationships. The vulnerability of the Duchess is seen in how the Duke exerts control over her image and memory even after her death.
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2. Tone:

- **"First Date - She"/"First Date - He":**
 - The tone is **light-hearted, humorous, and playful**. Both characters' internal monologues reflect their awkwardness and desire to impress each other. Their anxieties are presented in a relatable, charming way that makes the poems accessible and entertaining.
 - **"I Wanna Be Yours":**
 - The tone is **devoted and earnest**. Clarke's speaker uses simple, everyday language to express their deep love. The tone is also somewhat humorous and quirky, especially with the unconventional metaphors, but the underlying sentiment is one of genuine affection and devotion.
 - **"My Last Duchess":**
 - The tone is **sinister, controlling, and arrogant**. The Duke's calm, composed description of his late wife contrasts with the chilling implications of his monologue. His language is polished, but his arrogance and sense of entitlement reveal his obsession with control, creating a dark, unsettling tone.
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3. Poetic Devices:

- **Dramatic Monologue:**
 - **"First Date - She/He":**
Both poems are structured as internal monologues, giving insight into the characters' thoughts. The **dramatic irony** lies in the fact that the audience knows both characters are similarly nervous, while the characters themselves remain unaware of this.

- **"My Last Duchess":**
Browning's poem is a classic example of a **dramatic monologue**. The Duke speaks directly to an unseen listener (likely a marriage negotiator), revealing far more about his character than he realizes. The form allows Browning to explore the Duke's personality and his relationship with his deceased wife without explicit commentary.
- **"I Wanna Be Yours":**
While Clarke's poem is not a monologue in the strict sense, the speaker's voice dominates the poem as they directly address the object of their affection. The repetitive, conversational tone suggests a more intimate form of communication.
- **Metaphor:**
 - **"First Date - She/He":**
There is no heavy use of metaphor; instead, the humor comes from the straightforward, relatable thoughts of the characters. The lack of metaphor keeps the tone light and conversational.
 - **"I Wanna Be Yours":**
Clarke's poem uses extended metaphor throughout, comparing the speaker to various mundane household objects (vacuum cleaner, Ford Cortina, raincoat) to emphasize their devotion. These metaphors are humorous but also sincere, suggesting a love that is practical and ever-present.
 - **"My Last Duchess":**
Browning's use of metaphor is more subtle and embedded within the language of the Duke. The **portrait** of the Duchess becomes a metaphor for the Duke's desire to control her memory and image. She is reduced to an object, much like the other artworks he possesses.
- **Repetition:**
 - **"First Date - She/He":**
Repetition is used for comic effect, as both speakers repeat key lines such as **"I said I liked classical music"**. This emphasizes their preoccupation with maintaining appearances and highlights their nervousness.
 - **"I Wanna Be Yours":**
Repetition is a central feature of Clarke's poem, with the phrase **"I wanna be yours"** reinforcing the speaker's desire to be everything their partner needs. The repetition of the phrase creates a rhythmic, almost hypnotic effect.
 - **"My Last Duchess":**
Browning uses repetition sparingly, but the repeated focus on the Duchess's behaviour (**"her looks went everywhere"**) shows the Duke's obsessive jealousy. His repetitive references to her smiles and behaviour illustrate his fixation on controlling her.
- **Irony:**
 - **"First Date - She/He":**
The poems are filled with **dramatic irony**, as both characters are unaware that they share the same concerns and insecurities. The humour comes from the fact that the audience can see the disconnect between their perceptions and reality.
 - **"My Last Duchess":**
The Duke's speech is laced with **dramatic irony**, as he is oblivious to how monstrous his behaviour appears to the reader. While he believes he is

justified in his treatment of the Duchess, the audience sees the horror in his controlling nature.

- **Tone Shifts:**

- **"First Date - She/He":**

The tone remains light and playful throughout, focusing on the humorous side of dating anxiety.

- **"I Wanna Be Yours":**

The tone shifts between humour and sincerity, as the metaphors balance between quirky comparisons and a deeper sense of love and devotion.

- **"My Last Duchess":**

The tone shifts from seemingly polite conversation to a darker, more sinister revelation as the Duke hints at the fate of his last Duchess. The shift from surface-level admiration to jealousy and control is gradual but chilling.

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