

ASM TUITION ACADEMY

When we two parted

When We Two Parted

By Lord Byron

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sank chill on my brow—
It felt like a warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met—
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?—
With silence and tears.

Theme:

The central themes of "*When We Two Parted*" revolve around heartbreak, betrayal, loss, and unspoken grief. The poem reflects the deep emotional pain of a speaker who has been betrayed and abandoned by a former lover. The lingering sadness, shame, and the painful

memory of love lost dominate the speaker's thoughts, suggesting that the emotional scars of this separation will last for a long time.

Key themes include:

- **Betrayal:** The speaker feels the bitterness of broken vows and deceit from the lover.
- **Loss and Grief:** The poem is infused with a melancholic tone as the speaker mourns a love that has faded.
- **Silence and Secrecy:** The relationship was marked by secrecy, and after the parting, the speaker endures silent suffering, unable to express the depth of their pain.
- **Regret:** The speaker laments the time they spent in love, now filled with remorse and unresolved sadness.

Analysis:

In "*When We Two Parted*," Lord Byron reflects the deep emotional aftermath of a secret affair that ends in betrayal. The poem captures the immediate and long-term grief that comes from separation. The speaker's tone is melancholic and regretful, filled with sorrow over broken promises and feelings of abandonment.

Byron uses the repetition of the word "silence" at both the beginning and the end of the poem to emphasize the speaker's emotional isolation. The poem suggests that the relationship's beginning and end were characterized by secrecy, which adds to the speaker's sense of shame and loneliness. This secrecy is what keeps the speaker from openly expressing their grief, as the affair was likely considered improper or unacceptable by societal standards.

The use of the future tense in the final stanza also adds to the speaker's feeling of hopelessness, as they predict that even if they were to meet the lover again, nothing would change—there would still be "silence and tears." The speaker is trapped in a cycle of unspoken grief and regret, showing the lasting impact of this parting.

Poetic Devices:

1. **Rhyme Scheme:** The poem follows an alternating ABAB CDCD rhyme scheme, which adds to the structure and rhythm of the poem. This creates a steady, sombre rhythm, reflecting the speaker's emotional state.
2. **Alliteration:** Byron uses alliteration to emphasize certain emotional points. For example, "Pale grew thy cheek and cold, / Colder thy kiss," with the repetition of the 'k' sound reinforcing the coldness of both the physical and emotional aspects of the relationship.
3. **Repetition:** Repetition of phrases like "silence and tears" at the beginning and end of the poem reinforces the cyclical nature of grief and the unspoken suffering of the speaker.
4. **Imagery:** Byron uses cold imagery to evoke feelings of emotional detachment and death, such as "pale," "cold," and "dew of the morning" sinking "chill." This reflects the emotional distance between the speaker and the lover, as well as the death of their relationship.
5. **Metaphor:** The poem uses the metaphor of a "knell," a funeral bell, to suggest that hearing the lover's name is akin to a death sentence for the speaker's emotions. This metaphor underscores the deep sense of loss and finality the speaker feels.

6. **Tone:** The tone is sorrowful and melancholic throughout, with a deep sense of betrayal and regret. The use of past tense verbs like "grew," "felt," and "foretold" anchors the poem in memory, while the future tense in the last stanza ("If I should meet thee") suggests the endlessness of the speaker's grief.
7. **Enjambment:** Enjambment (the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line) is used to carry the flow of emotions between lines, reflecting the speaker's inability to fully contain their grief. For example, in the line "A knell to mine ear; / A shudder comes o'er me—", the emotions overflow from one line to the next.
8. **Contrast:** Byron contrasts the past and present emotions of the speaker, especially with phrases like "pale grew thy cheek" and "colder thy kiss," which highlights the change in the lover's affection over time. This contrast between warmth and coldness illustrates the betrayal and fading love that the speaker laments.

Overall, *"When We Two Parted"* is a powerful exploration of love, secrecy, and emotional devastation, with Byron masterfully using poetic devices to evoke the intensity of the speaker's grief and betrayal.

Comparison with neutral tones

Both *"When We Two Parted"* by Lord Byron and *"Neutral Tones"* by Thomas Hardy explore themes of heartbreak, betrayal, and emotional desolation in relationships. However, they differ in their style, tone, and perspectives on love and separation. Here's a detailed comparison between the two poems:

Theme Comparison:

- **Heartbreak and Loss:** Both poems focus on the pain of lost love and the emotional emptiness that follows a breakup. In *"When We Two Parted,"* the speaker is deeply hurt by a lover who has betrayed him, and the sorrow lingers long after the separation. In *"Neutral Tones,"* the speaker reflects on a failed relationship, viewing it with detachment and bitterness. However, Hardy's speaker has a more resigned attitude toward love's end, compared to Byron's speaker, who expresses more intense and personal grief.
- **Betrayal and Deception:** In *"When We Two Parted,"* the betrayal is explicit: the former lover has broken vows and deceived the speaker, and their reputation is tarnished. The betrayal feels raw and personal. In *"Neutral Tones,"* betrayal is implied through the emotional distance between the two lovers. There is no direct mention of infidelity or broken promises, but the relationship has become lifeless, with mutual disappointment. The sense of betrayal is subtler in Hardy's poem, stemming from emotional withdrawal rather than overt dishonesty.
- **Memory and Lingering Pain:** Both poems feature the idea that the memory of a lost love lingers painfully. In Byron's poem, the speaker predicts that even if they meet the lover again, the same feelings of sorrow and silence will persist. Hardy's speaker reflects on the past encounter with a sense of finality, where the landscape of nature itself reflects the deadness of the relationship. While Byron's speaker is still actively grieving, Hardy's speaker has reached a point of numb acceptance.

Tone Comparison:

- **Byron's "When We Two Parted":** The tone is one of deep sorrow and betrayal, with passionate emotions still evident. The speaker feels "half-broken hearted" and betrayed, experiencing an ongoing sense of regret and shame. The tone remains melancholic and regretful throughout, with a lingering emotional impact felt in the repetition of "silence and tears" at both the beginning and end.
- **Hardy's "Neutral Tones":** The tone is colder and more detached. The speaker looks back on the relationship with bitterness, describing the scene with neutral, lifeless imagery. The "neutral" tone reflects the emotional indifference that has developed between the two lovers. Hardy's use of color imagery (such as "white," "gray," and "ash") emphasizes the dullness and lack of vitality in the relationship. The speaker has resigned to the fact that love has failed, without the lingering intensity found in Byron's poem.

Imagery Comparison:

- **Nature and Imagery:** Both poems use nature to reflect the emotional states of the speakers, but they do so in different ways.
 - In *"When We Two Parted,"* Byron uses **cold imagery** to convey emotional desolation: "Pale grew thy cheek and cold, / Colder thy kiss." The speaker's heartbreak is directly linked to the coldness of the lover and the relationship.
 - In *"Neutral Tones,"* Hardy uses **neutral, colourless imagery** to depict the deadness of the relationship. The "sun was white" and the leaves lay "Gray," reflecting the emotional lifelessness between the two lovers. Nature mirrors the speaker's internal state of disillusionment and disconnection, whereas Byron's nature imagery focuses on coldness to reflect betrayal.
- **Death and Lifelessness:** Both poets use death-related imagery to symbolize the end of the relationship. Byron uses "a knell to mine ear" as a metaphor for the lover's name being like a death bell, signalling the end of love. Hardy, on the other hand, refers to the "deadest thing" in the relationship, reflecting the emotional death rather than the physical or dramatic death that Byron hints at.

Poetic Devices Comparison:

- **Rhyme and Structure:** Both poems follow structured rhyme schemes, but their effects differ.
 - **Byron:** The ABAB rhyme scheme in *"When We Two Parted"* mirrors the steady flow of grief and emphasizes the repetitive nature of sorrow and betrayal. The regular rhythm contributes to the sombre, mournful tone.
 - **Hardy:** *"Neutral Tones"* uses an ABBA rhyme scheme, which creates a sense of entrapment or closure. The inward-looking rhyme pattern reflects the speaker's contemplation of the dead relationship. The final stanza's rhyme reinforces the inevitability of the end of love, encapsulating the emotional isolation of the speaker.
- **Repetition:**
 - In Byron's poem, repetition of phrases like "silence and tears" reinforces the sense of unending grief and isolation after the breakup.
 - In Hardy's poem, repetition is less prominent, but the use of neutral, dull imagery and words such as "Gray" and "deadest" emphasizes the monotonous and lifeless nature of the relationship.
- **Symbolism:**

- In "*When We Two Parted*," Byron uses coldness and silence as symbols of emotional distance and betrayal.
- In "*Neutral Tones*," Hardy uses natural imagery like the "Gray leaves" and "white sun" to symbolize emotional barrenness and disillusionment.

Conclusion:

- **Byron's Perspective:** Byron's speaker is still actively mourning the end of a love that was passionate but ultimately devastating. There is an intensity in the emotional reaction, as the speaker is deeply hurt and betrayed by the lover's broken promises.
- **Hardy's Perspective:** Hardy's speaker reflects on love with a more detached and resigned perspective. The relationship has already decayed, and the speaker now looks back on it with bitterness, but without the emotional intensity of Byron's speaker. There is more of a sense of acceptance of the inevitable end.

Both poems offer nuanced examinations of lost love, but while Byron's poem focuses on passionate grief and betrayal, Hardy's "*Neutral Tones*" expresses a colder, more resigned view of love's failure.