

# ***A Love Sonnet***

Today is Valentine's Day, that magical moment in time for lovers everywhere. Conveyance of feelings may be done in a variety of ways, and one of them is poetry.

Perhaps the greatest love sonnet ever written is *How Do I Love Thee*, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She was an English poet of the Romantic Movement, born in 1806 at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, England. Her family owned sugar plantations in Jamaica, relying on slave labor. As a teenager, she developed a lung ailment that plagued her for the rest of her life. While saddling a pony at the age of 15, she suffered a spinal injury. Her appetite for classical literature was accompanied by a passionate enthusiasm for the Christian faith.

At the age of 39, Elizabeth started a correspondence with another poet, Robert Browning, and they married in 1846 after running away from her tyrannical father. She died, romantically, in her husband's arms on June 29, 1861. With that background, for all lovers today, here is her masterpiece:

## **How Do I Love Thee?**

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.*

What a wonderful depiction of the feelings of a woman for the man she adores!

But Valentine's Day is not only for romantic love. It is also for the affection and appreciation that a person may hold for family members and friends.

So, today, do some writing of your own – a card, a letter or an e-mail to someone you care about. Perhaps that individual is a co-worker, or a mentor, or a resident in a nursing center. It's a good bet that a parent or grandparent would be thrilled with a note or flowers from you.

Even better, of course, is face mail – a verbal expression of thanks and admiration to someone special in your life.

--Beecher Hunter