

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

by [Christopher Marlowe](#)

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle,
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

Literary Analysis

This [poem](#) is a celebration of love, innocence, youth, and poetry. Since the traditional image of shepherds is that they are innocent and accustomed to living in an idyllic [setting](#), the purpose of such a pastoral poem is to idealize the harmony, peace, and simplicity of the shepherd's life.

The [main idea](#) of this poem is romantic love mingled with themes such as man, the natural world, and time. In this poem, a shepherd is presented as speaking to his beloved, evoking "*all the pleasures*" of the springtime. The [speaker](#) is a loving shepherd, who tries to persuade his beloved to stay with him in the countryside. As it is a pastoral poem, its physical setting is the countryside, and its temporal setting is the spring season.

The title "*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*" refers to the love of a shepherd for his beloved, based on his romantic ideals of presenting her the [beauty](#) of the idyllic world in which he is living. The poem opens with the popular romantic line, "*Come live with me, and be my love.*" Obviously, he is addressing

his beloved. He wants her to come and experience pleasures as he says, *"we will all the pleasures prove."*

The shepherd describes the setting in detail: *"That valleys, groves, hills, and fields, / Woods, or steepy mountain yields."* He then makes a promise to her in the next [stanza](#), saying *"we will sit upon the rocks, / seeing the shepherds feed their flocks."* The lure of the natural setting—of singing birds, nearby waterfalls, and mountains—is sure to be highly attractive to a beloved.

The poem continues with the shepherd's future gifts that he will present to his lover: *"I will make thee beds of roses."* The poet has used a word [pun](#) in the next [phrase](#) *"a thousand fragrant posies"* where *"posies"* has a double meaning: it both refers to poetry as well as a bunch of flowers in Renaissance terms. In addition, he has used floral [imagery](#) to suggest fertility of the countryside. Amid this romantic setting, the shepherd says that he would make *"a cap of flowers, and a kirtle"* to demonstrate his love, adding further that he would also make a gown for her *"of the finest wool."*

The use of a poetic device known as blazon is highly suggestive here. A blazon is the method through which the speaker praises his beloved, singling out parts of her body with the help of metaphors. His arguments appeal to the senses and give feelings of pleasure and love, stating *"A belt of straw, and ivy buds, / with coral clasps and amber studs."* Following this, the shepherd adds sexual overtones to the stanza by repeating the word *"pleasures"* in *"And if these pleasures may thee move,"* whereas *"move"* here implies emotions.

His last promise is that *"The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing, / For thy delight each May morning."* This is the final push to coax his beloved to *"live with me and be my love"* which is his ultimate objective.

Structural Analysis

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is penned as a love poem in the pastoral [lyric](#) tradition, containing six quatrains with rhyming couplets. The [rhyme](#) scheme is AABB:

Come live with me and be my love, A
And we will all the pleasures prove A
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields, B
Woods, or steepy mountain yields. B

The [meter](#) and beat is regular, which is iambic tetrameter as in *"By shallow rivers, to whose falls, / Melodious birds sing madrigals."* The majority of lines are written in iambic tetrameter, though a few lines are in modified [trochaic](#) tetrameter such as *"Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks"* (the modification is that the line ends on a stressed beat). The meter provides a great deal of music and creates flow in the poem.

[Enjambment](#) is present in almost all the stanzas such as in *"A gown made of the finest wool / Which from our pretty lambs we pull."* The poet has used [hypotaxis](#) to further describe the bed of roses by adding several other things as subordinate clauses: *"And a thousand fragrant posies, / A cap of flowers, and a kirtle, / embroidered all with leaves of myrtle."*

The [diction](#) is figurative, as the poet uses several images and metaphors. Furthermore, [feminine rhyme](#) is used to create special effects such as “There **will I make thee beds of roses.**” There is a rhyming word at the end of the line which contains two syllables, while the final syllable is unstressed.

Guidance for Usage of Quotes

Love plays a major role in this poem, as the opening line encourages readers to think of it in terms of romantic interest. The lover in the poem makes promises to his beloved about how they can live a romantic and ideal life in the countryside. The fanciful nature and energy of youth can be seen in “the passionate shepherd” as a lover. Thus, lovers can use quotes to send to their beloveds in this way:

*“Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove.”*

They can also show their promises by imagining making beds of roses and saying,

*“And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle,
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.”*

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What figures of speech are used in the poem "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"?

This poem is a form of [pastoral](#) poetry, a type of poetry that deals with shepherds that is set in the countryside. It is essentially a call by the shepherd to a woman to enjoy the delights that nature and wildlife have to offer. Marlowe uses several different figures of speech and poetic devices. For example, in the second line, he uses consonance, or the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words that are close together, in the phrase "pleasures prove." Later examples of consonance in the poem are "coral clasps" and "shepherds's swains." He also uses assonance, or the repetition of the same internal vowel sounds in words that are close together, in lines such as "me" and "be" in the first line and "seeing" and "feed" in the second stanza. In addition, Marlowe uses repetition of the first part of a line, or [anaphora](#); he begins many lines with the word "and" to stress how many beautiful delights and activities he will offer his love.

The best way to analyze the figures of speech in Marlowe's ["The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"](#) is to look at treatises on figures of speech written by Marlowe's near contemporaries such as George Puttenham, Angel Day, Abraham Fraunce, Richard Sherry, and George Puttenham. On the level of figures of sound, Marlowe uses [alliteration](#) frequently, especially on stressed syllables within a clause, e.g. "may-morning", "mind ... move". [Metaphor](#) appears in the line "melodious birds sing madrigals" (note also the alliteration), in that it is an indirect comparison of bird song with elaborate Italianate music. Much of the poem involves [hyperbole](#), or exaggeration, e.g. "all the pleasures, thousand fragrant, etc."

What metaphors are used in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" by Christopher Marlowe?

One extended metaphor used in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" by Christopher Marlowe is the shepherd himself, who comes to represent the traditionally recognized male role in relationships.

For all the poetic devices used in ["The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"](#), [metaphor](#) is one of the least utilized. The shepherd's descriptions of the many pleasures of living simply in the natural world are literal descriptions of concrete objects, after all. However, some features of the poem could be viewed in a metaphorical light, such as the "beds of Roses" the shepherd promises to make for his beloved.

While many of the objects the shepherd describes are literal objects one could see being given to a person, such as gold-buckled shoes with warm lining or a gown made from sheep's wool, a bed of roses is not likely to be a literal gift. Roses are the traditional symbol for love, particularly romantic love, and the bed is a piece of furniture with sexual connotations since that is where the act of love is generally performed. So the beds of roses could, therefore, be a sexual metaphor, the promise of erotic fulfillment in a picturesque setting.

What are the literary devices used in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" by Christopher Marlowe? How do they enhance the poem?

Literary devices are used by poets to make their meaning clearer in poems in only a few words. There are many types of literary devices used in poems. Three in this [pastoral](#) poem are heroic couplets, sensory details and [alliteration](#).

Heroic couples are pairs of rhyming lines written in iambic pentameter. Shakespeare made these popular in his sonnets (this is not a sonnet), but they produce a beautifully rhythmic poem. Notice that the rhyming lines continue throughout the poem. An example from the first stanza that sometimes the words don't seem to rhyme, but within the rhythm of the poem they do:

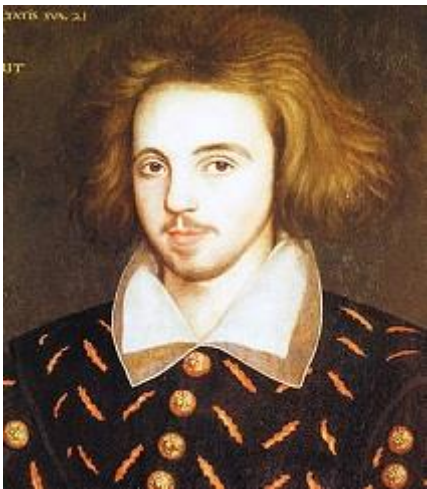
COME live with me and be my Love,

And we...

'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' is a pastoral love poem written by Christopher Marlowe. It presents the pleas of a love-struck shepherd calling to his beloved to spend her life with him. Read more about this poem and the hidden truths behind its flowery promises.

Overview of the Poem

'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' is an example of pastoral poetry written by Christopher Marlowe. Pastoral poetry plays off the very common romanticizing of rustic or country living with a 'back to nature' sentiment. While we may think of only our modern world as having this very urban sentiment, the truth is that people have been fantasizing about getting back to nature for centuries.



This 16th Century poem centers around a shepherd painting an idyllic picture of what country life will be like to the woman he loves. The very first line begins 'Come live with me, and be my love.' What follows is a series of descriptions and promises of what this wonderful life as a shepherd's wife will be like.

The first and second stanzas promise the target of the poem a life full of the pleasures that nature can bring, from the fields to the mountains. This includes a life of leisure, watching the shepherds tend their flocks and listening to birds sing from hilltops.

The next three stanzas are full of material offers. The poet describes a bed of roses anointed with fragrant posies and promises to outfit his love with fine clothes drawn from nature. Her gown will be 'of the finest wool' and adorned with leaves. Her shoes will have golden buckles, and even her belt will be intricately decorated.

The final two stanzas paint a picture of a life of luxury. They will eat the finest food from silver plates set on ivory tables. Each morning young shepherds will sing for their delight. Finally, the speaker ends by repeating his initial call to her, saying 'If these delights thy mind may move / Then live with me, and be my love.'

Themes and Analysis

Shepherding isn't a traditionally profitable job. Historically, shepherds tended to be fairly poor and work their entire lives. With this reality in mind, the speaker of this poem attempts to counter that by creating a picture of natural wealth and beauty.



The dress he promises her will be 'from our pretty lambs.' Her belt will be 'of straw and ivy buds,' but with clasps of coral and amber. This plays into the theme of pastoral romanticism. A bed of roses and posies in place of fine silks and perfumes suggests a richer, more rewarding, and simple life. Instead of buying her a hat, he'll make her one from flowers.

All this talk of not needing fancy material wealth sounds very earnest, but the speaker isn't consistent throughout the poem. Amidst these simple charms, he still makes grandiose promises of gold buckles for her shoes, silver serving plates, and ivory tables. Precious metals are a bit beyond the normal shepherd's budget, suggesting that even the speaker may not entirely believe his appeal to simpler beauty.

Another recurring theme in this poem is the complete absence of work. He promises that 'we will sit upon the rocks / and watch the shepherds feed their flocks.' Nowhere, though, does he mention that they will have to feed and tend their own flocks. Likewise, he talks about how food will be 'prepared each day for thee and me,' but never mentions that it will be her doing the preparation.