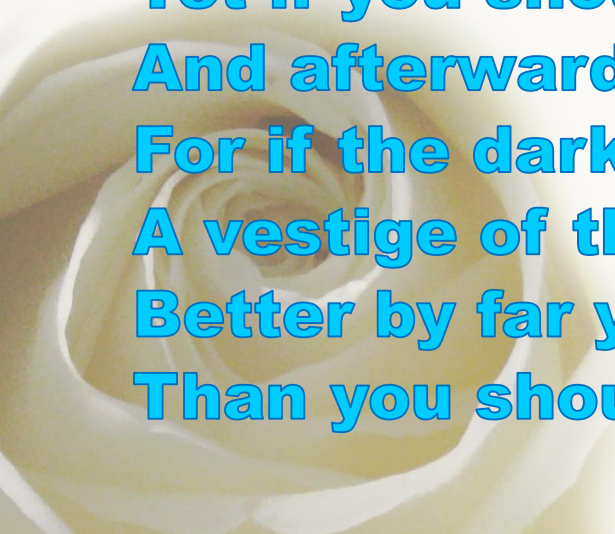


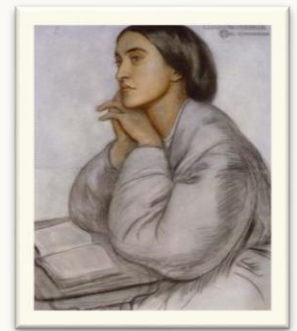
# **REMEMBER** – *Christina Rossetti*



**Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day      5  
You tell me of our future that you planned:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve;      10  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than you should remember and be sad.**



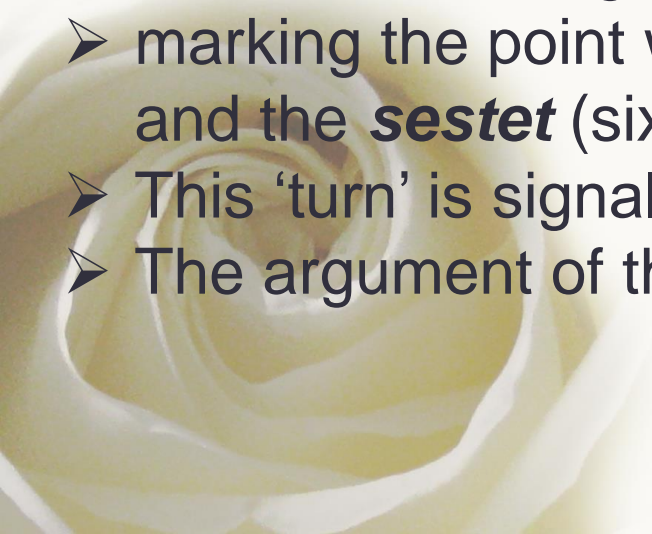
# *SUMMARY:*



- The narrator, who presumably represents Rossetti, addresses her beloved and encourages him to remember her after her death.
- She asks him to remember her even when his memory of her begins to fade.
- Eventually, the narrator gives this person her permission to forget her gradually because it is better to *"forget and smile"* than to *"remember and be sad."*

# PETRARCHAN/ITALIAN SONNET

- **Remember** is composed in the form known as the *Italian* or *Petrarchan* sonnet,
- rhymed *abba abba cdd ece*,
- traditionally associated with love poetry.
- As with all Petrarchan sonnets there is a *volta* (or 'turn') at the end of the eighth line and the beginning of the ninth,
- marking the point where the **octave** (eight-line section) ends and the **sestet** (six-line section) begins.
- This 'turn' is signalled by Rossetti's use of the word '**Yet**'.
- The argument of the sonnet changes direction at this point.



# ANALYSIS

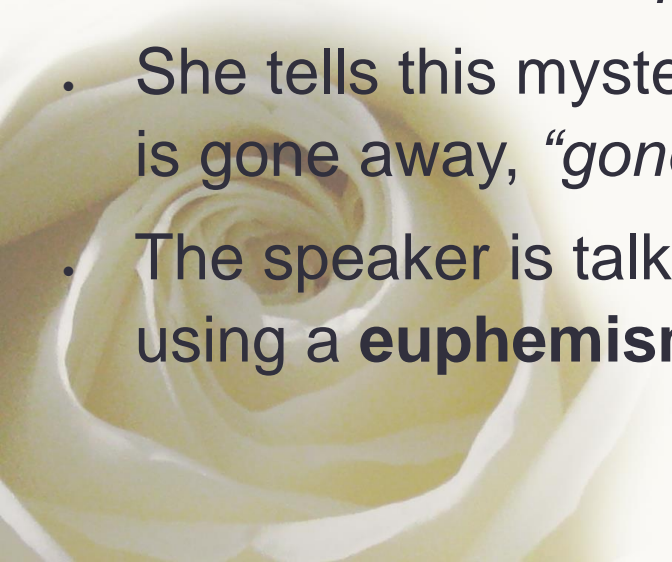
## THE OCTAVE



### LINES 1 – 2

*Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;*

- The poem opens with the narrator addressing somebody.
- “*when I am gone away*” is a **euphemism** for ‘*when I am dead/when I have passed on.*’
- She tells this mysterious person to remember her when she is gone away, “*gone far away into the silent land.*”
- The speaker is talking about death, but she’s essentially using a **euphemism** for Death – “*the silent land.*”



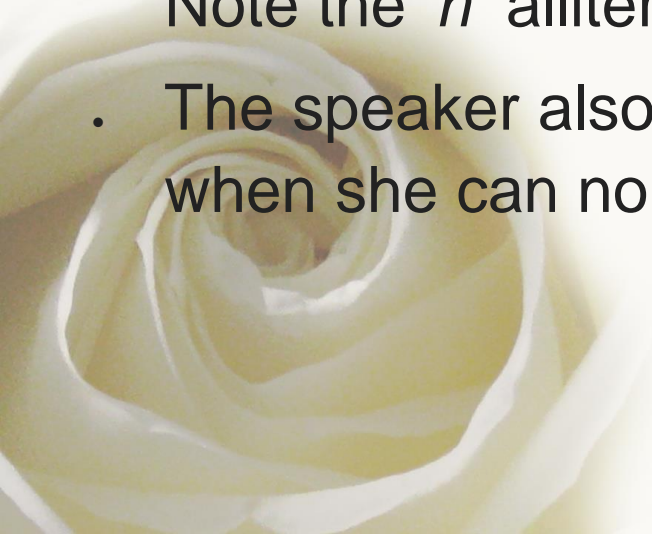
- She wants the person she's addressing – her beloved – to remember her even after she is dead and gone – “*gone to the silent land.*”
- What the speaker really means here is that, after she dies, she will no longer be able to communicate with her beloved. Thus, the afterlife will be a “*silent land,*” – **metaphor.**
- “*Remember me*” is **juxtaposed** with “*gone away,*” which suggests that remembrance may be a **metaphor** for life.



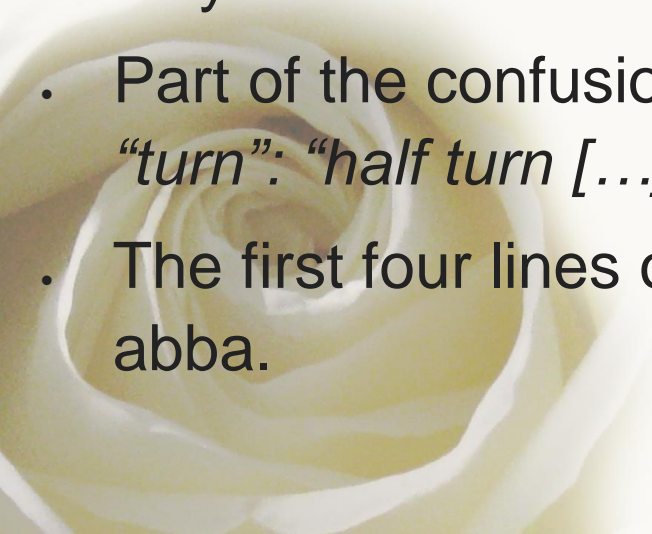
## LINES 3 – 4

*When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.*

- Even though the speaker does not say “*remember me*” again, it is understood that she wants him to remember her.
- The speaker is telling her beloved to still remember her even when he can no longer (“*no more*”) hold her hand. Note the ‘*h*’ alliteration.
- The speaker also wants her beloved to remember her when she can no longer start to leave, but then turn back.



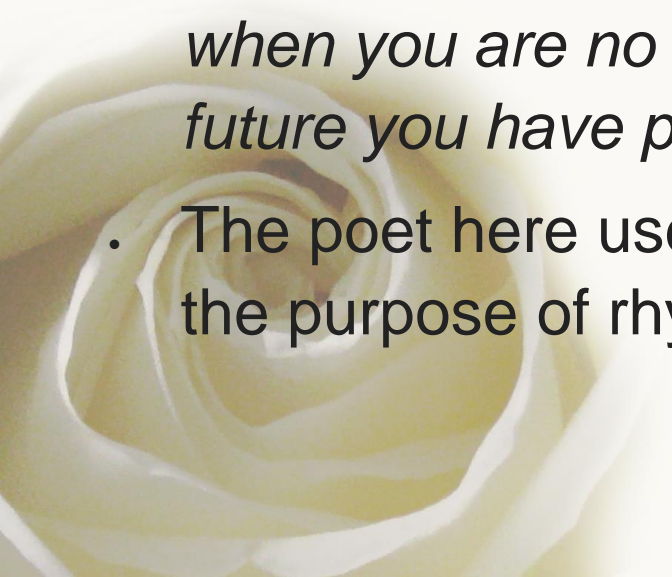
- *“half turn to go yet turning stay”* – it sounds like the speaker is recalling a common scenario; whenever she would start to leave, she would turn back to catch one last glimpse of her beloved before leaving. Note the **antithesis** in “go” and “stay”.
- In other words, she would prepare to leave, but then turn back a little bit.
- So, while half turning to leave, she would also be turning to stay.
- Part of the confusion here, has to do with the **repetition** of “turn”: *“half turn [...] yet turning stay.”*
- The first four lines of this poem follow this rhyme scheme: abba.



## LINES 5 – 6

*Remember me when no more, day by day,  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:*

- Just in case the speaker's beloved forgets that he is supposed to remember her, she tells him *again*.
- She reminds him to remember her when he is no longer able to tell her of the future he planned for them, every day.
- In normal conversation we would just say "*remember me when you are no longer able to tell me day by day of the future you have planned for us.*"
- The poet here uses **inversion** – change of word order – for the purpose of rhythm or emphasis, or both.

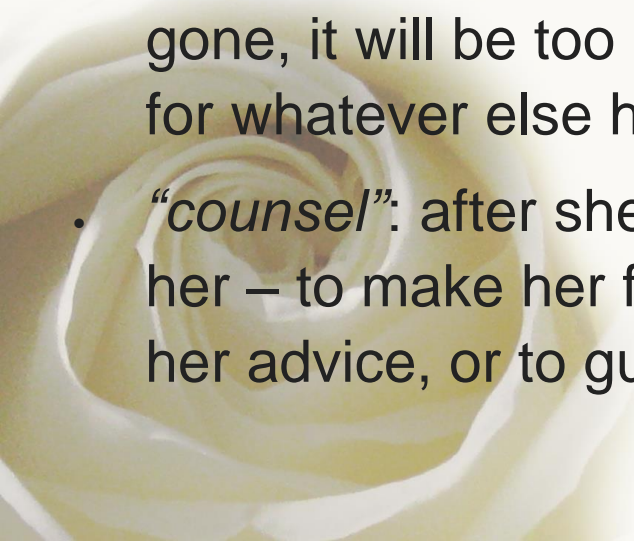




## LINES 7 – 8

*Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.*

- The speaker tells her beloved to just remember her one more time.
- The word “*remember*” is repeated three times in the poem – EMPHASIS.
- All the beloved has to do is remember her because, by the time she is dead and gone, it will be too late to “*counsel then or pray.*”
- “*pray*”: to beg or beseech God. By the time she is dead and gone, it will be too late to pray for her to come back, and to pray for whatever else he wants to pray for.
- “*counsel*”: after she is dead and gone it will be too late to counsel her – to make her feel better like he always used to do, or to give her advice, or to guide her or to give her direction.



- The speaker repeats “*remember me*” for the third time.
- By now we know this is a **metaphor** for life.
- A small ambiguity is worth noting:  
The “*only*” in “*only remember me*” could mean either  
“I only ask that you remember me”  
or  
“the only thing you should do is remember me.”

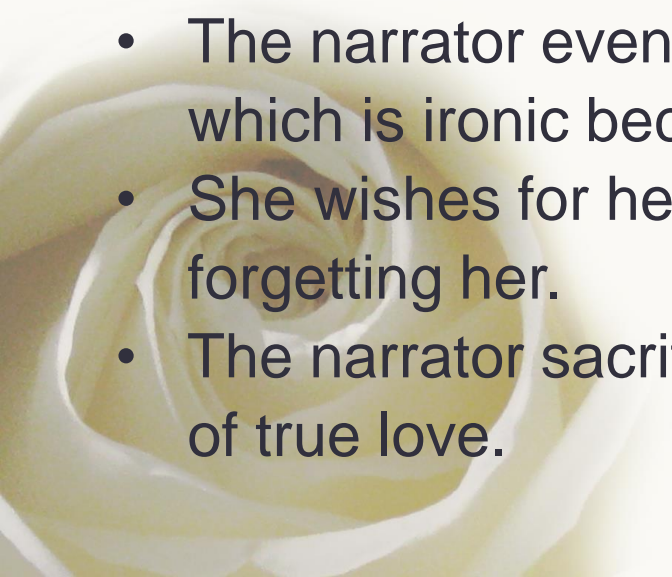


# *THE SESTET*

## **LINES 9 – 11**

*Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve;  
For if the darkness and corruption leave*

- However, her opinion changes near the end – or the volta, as it is known.
- The volta typically accompanies a change in attitude, which is true in this poem.
- The narrator even renounces the need to be remembered, which is ironic because the poem is titled “*Remember.*”
- She wishes for her beloved to be happy, even if that means forgetting her.
- The narrator sacrifices her personal desire in an expression of true love.



- Slowly, her words linger over the idea that *‘yet if you should forget me for a while’*, it would not be a terrible thing – do not suffer any regret.
- The third **euphemism** can be seen in line 11, when the poet says: *“For if the darkness and corruption leave”*.
- In this line, death is viewed as *darkness and corruption* – disease. It is like a body decaying.



## LINES 12 – 14

*A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than you should remember and be sad.*

“*vestige*” – a trace or piece of evidence, a reminder, a suggestion, a hint.

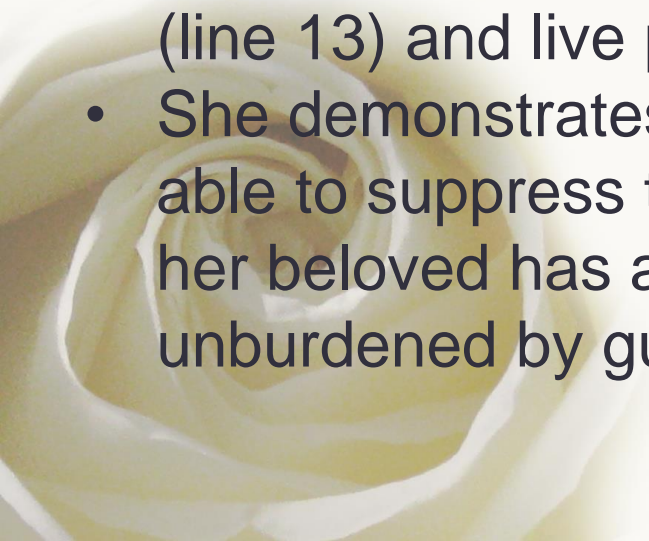
- The narrator here is very excited and says that her beloved should **not** take her death and his subsequent memory as a burden to him.
- Therefore, she suggests that he should better *‘forget and smile.’*
- When the speaker tells her beloved not to grieve, technically she is commanding or ordering him, but she is also speaking like a comforting friend, or lover, or parent. It is *“Please do not grieve sweetheart.”*

- This consoling tone can be heard in the poem's alliterations here, too, with the 'b', 'f' and 's' sounds in:

*"Better by far you should forget and smile (Line 13)*

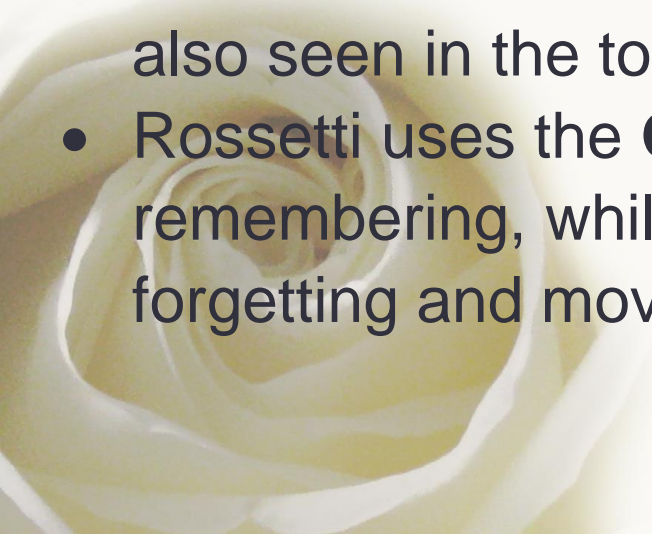
*Than you should remember and be sad." (Line 14)*

- The combinations create a sonic symmetry in these lines that puts the ear at rest, soothing the reader as the speaker soothes her lover.
- The speaker seems to be giving her partner permission to let go of the memories and his sorrow in order to 'smile' (line 13) and live positively after her passing.
- She demonstrates the selfless depth of her love, as she is able to suppress the human need to be remembered so that her beloved has a chance at a happy life after her death, unburdened by guilt.



# *FORM AND STRUCTURE*

- Rossetti uses the form of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet to convey her message.
- The first two quatrains of this sonnet start with the word '*remember*' (lines 1 and 5), and the tone in the **OCTAVE** is mournful.
- The rhyme scheme used in lines 1 – 8 is a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a.
- The c-d-d-e-c-e rhyme scheme used in the **SESTET** of lines 9 – 14 establishes a break from the octave. This break is also seen in the tone and content of the poem.
- Rossetti uses the **OCTAVE** to address memories and remembering, while the **SESTET** focuses on the process of forgetting and moving forward.



# *FORM AND STRUCTURE*

- In the first 8 lines of the poem, the speaker is obsessed with telling her beloved to remember her after she dies.
- Starting around line 9, however, the speaker starts to shift her focus away from remembrance to forgetfulness.
- By the end of the poem, the speaker actually says it is better for her beloved to forget about her than to remember her and feel sad.
- Thus, the two sections of this poem are almost polar opposites.





# POETIC/LANGUAGE DEVICES

- Rossetti uses **euphemism** to discuss difficult subject matter: Death becomes '*gone away*' (line 1), while the afterlife is expressed as '*the silent land*' (line 2).
- The simple imagery of the physical linking of hands in line 3, as well as the speaker's reluctance to be separated, underlines the strong connection between the speaker and her beloved.
- Notice that despite the use of words with negative connotations in the sestet, for example '*grieve*' (line 10), '*darkness*' and '*corruption*' (line 11), Rossetti establishes a lingering mood of positive acceptance. What might have been a depressing poem with sad content becomes a poem that ultimately celebrates life.

# POETIC/LANGUAGE DEVICES

## REPETITION

The term '**remember**' runs, like a **refrain**, throughout the sonnet. However, its power seems to decrease through the poem, rather as if the voice and memory of the speaker is fading from life:

- The first two **imperative verbs** – *Remember* – are placed at the start rather than the end of the first and fifth lines.
- In the middle of the seventh, the strength of the request is modified by the word '*Only*' on its third appearance.
- It is further qualified in adverbial sub-clauses by '*And afterwards*' and '*Better ... you / Than ... you*' in the sestet, losing its association with '*me*'.

# *POETIC/LANGUAGE DEVICES*

Further **repetition** with variation is seen in:

- ‘*gone away / Gone far away*’, which reinforces the distance that is growing between the speaker and her lover and emphasises the boundary that exists between life and death.
- “*if you should forget / Better ... you should forget*”, which turns the possibility of forgetfulness into an imperative.



# *SOUND & TONE*

- The long syllables used in the opening lines force a slow, mournful reading of the sonnet. This is contrasted by the pace of lines 9 and 13, for example, which is more ‘up-beat’ and positive.
- If we had to describe the sound of ‘*Remember*’ in two words, those two words would be:  
**‘commanding’** and  
**‘consoling’**
- The poem’s title is a command – “***Remember.***” That same command is repeated three more times in the poem, at lines 1, 5, 7.



# SOUND & TONE

- In addition to this repeated imperative, there is also that “*do not grieve*” in line 10.
- Now even though this poem is definitely marked by a commanding tone, it is not the same tone someone would use when yelling at you to clean up your room.
- It is a gentler kind of commanding.
- Note, for example, that the speaker’s orders are often flanked by tender recollections: hand-holding, planning a future together.
- Notice, too, that you get some **alliteration** in the first section to soften the commanding blow.
- Note all the **‘h’** sounds in “*When you can no more hold me by the hand, / Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay*” (lines 3 – 4).

# SOUND & TONE

- Those soft, breathy **‘h’**s make the line seem less sharp and demanding, more desperate in a way with the panting desire of the speaker’s plea.
- The commands in the first section are also flanked by various consoling remarks.
- This brings us to our second sonic quality.
- When the speaker tells her beloved not to grieve, technically she is commanding or ordering him, but she is also speaking like a comforting friend, or lover, or parent. It is “Please do not grieve sweetheart”.
- This consoling tone can be heard in the poem’s alliterations here, too, with the repetition of the **‘b’**, **‘f’** and **‘s’** sounds in: **“Better **b**y **f**ar you **s**hould **f**orget and **s**mile”** (Line 13).
- The combinations create a sonic symmetry in the line that puts the ear at rest, soothing us as the speaker soothes her lover.

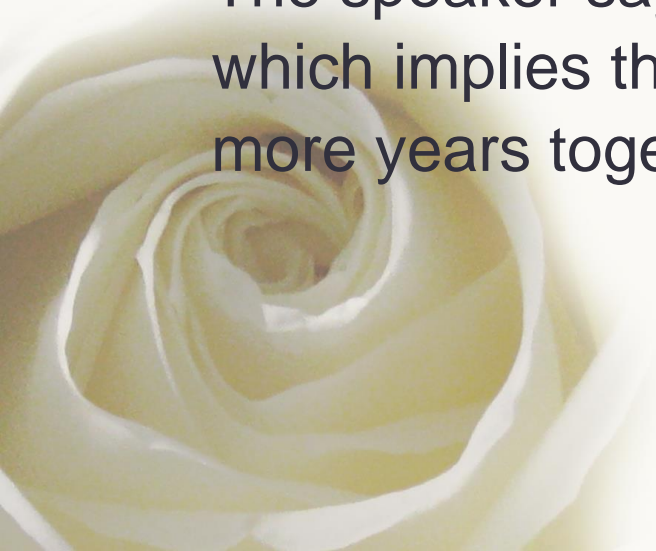
# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**1. Provide a different euphemism that Rossetti could have used in place of 'gone away' (line 1).**

'passed on' OR 'no more' (OR any other gentle way of stating 'dead')

**2. Which line of the poem shows that the couple expected to share many years of life together?**

The speaker says, '*our future that you planned*' (line 6), which implies that the couple planned to spend many more years together.



**3. What does ‘to counsel’ (line 8) mean in the context of the poem?**

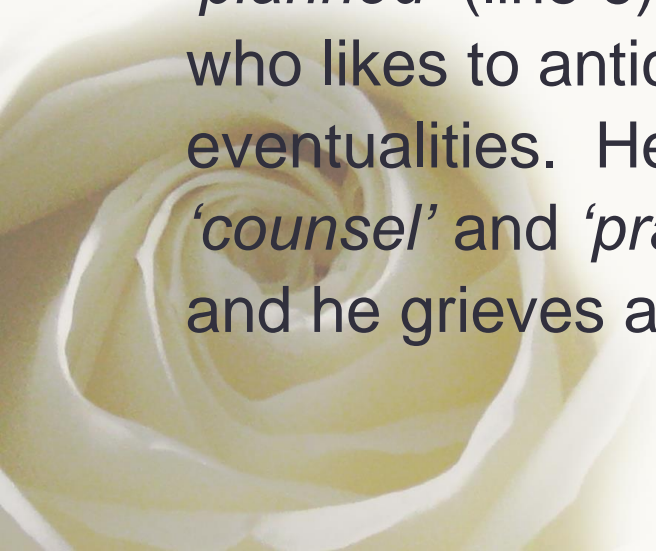
Given that the speaker is dying, the ‘*counsel*’ possibly refers to the loved one giving advice as to how she could fight the disease or ‘*corruption*’ (line 11) by taking medication, resting, getting fresh air or other well-meaning suggestions. Alternatively, it could simply refer to the attempt to give comfort in a difficult situation.





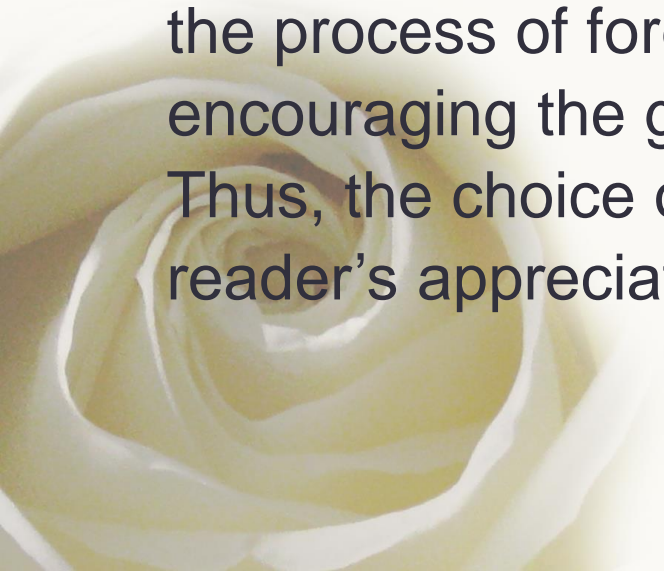
**4. What can you infer about the character of the speaker's beloved? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.**

The 'beloved' might be a committed companion who shows his affection through the physical closeness of holding her '*by the hand*' (line 3), and whose persuasive appeal causes her to abandon the intention to leave, but rather '*turning stay*' (line 4). The beloved might be an optimist, since he liked to imagine their future that he '*planned*' (line 6), or he might be an organised individual who likes to anticipate and prepare for future eventualities. He is supportive and loving, as he would '*counsel*' and '*pray*' (line 8) as she lay on her deathbed and he grieves at her passing.



## 5. How does the form of the poem contribute to its content?

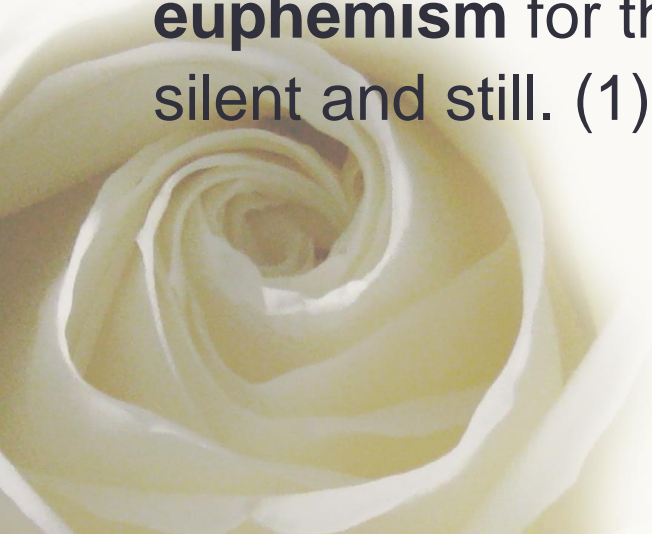
The poem is divided into two parts, in keeping with its Petrarchan or Italian sonnet form. The octave (lines 1 – 8) focuses on remembering aspects of the relationship and has a **sad, mournful tone**. The sestet (lines 9 – 14) is signified by the use of a new sentence beginning with **‘Yet’** (line 9), alerting the reader to a shift in direction. The sestet adopts **a more comforting tone** as it explores the process of forgetting, and the speaker appears to be encouraging the grieving partner to move on with his life. Thus, the choice of form of the poem contributes to the reader’s appreciation and understanding of its content.



7. Refer to line 2: '*Gone far away into the silent land*'. What do you understand by this line in the context of the poem?

The speaker is asking to be remembered when she is '*gone away*'. We realise that she is referring to her death, when she will be far out of reach, and no longer occupy the same world of the person she is addressing. (1)

She will have '*gone far away*' to the '*silent land*' (line 2), a **euphemism** for the after-life, which she envisages as being silent and still. (1)



**8. Describe the nature of the relationship as revealed by the speaker in lines 3 – 6.**

The relationship was a close one. They were physically close, evident in her being held *'by the hand'* (line 3). (1)

They spent *'day by day'* (line 5) together and believed that their relationship would last for many years as they discussed plans for the future. She seemed reluctant to leave his presence as she would *'turn to go'* but then *'turning stay'* (line 4). (1)

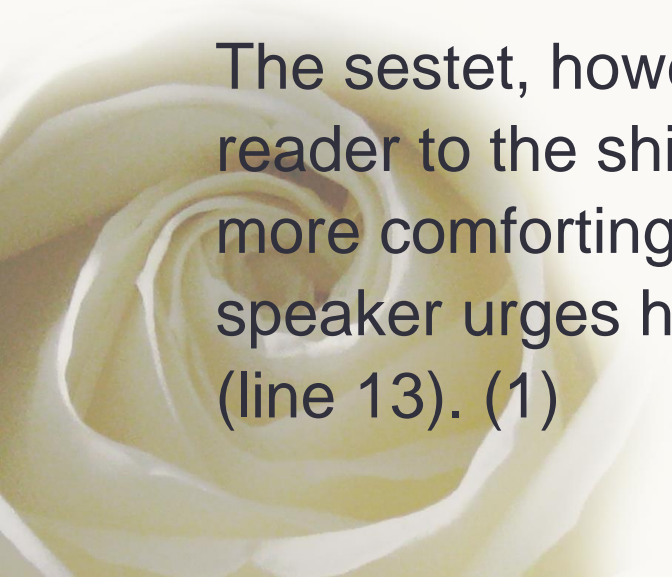


**9. Explain how the structure of the poem is mirrored by the change in tone of the poem.**

As this is a Petrarchan sonnet, which is clear from the rhyme scheme, there is a natural division between the octave and the sestet. (1)

The tone of the octave is sad, nostalgic and filled with regret. (1)

The sestet, however, begins with **‘Yet’**, alerting the reader to the shift in content and tone, and moves to a more comforting, consoling and forgiving tone as the speaker urges her loved one to *‘forget and smile’* (line 13). (1)



**10. Consider the speaker's message in line 9 – 14. In your view does this message contradict the poem's title? Give reasons for your answer.**

The octave focuses on reminders and pleas for him to '*remember*' her and the special times they shared. The message of the sestet, however, is for the loved one to move on with his life and not to wallow in grief at her passing. (1)

She selflessly wants him to be happy rather than miserable in remembering her. This seems to contradict the title, but as the speaker's feelings are reflected in the octave and echoed in the final line, this seems appropriate. (1)

The message is for him to remember her and be happy. (1)

