

Romantic Readings

A History of Love – by *Diane Ackerman*

“Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful. It has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love’s spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable? Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots spreading into deep and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of loving, and being loved.”

Any Husband or Wife – by *Carole Haynes*

“Let us be guests in one another’s house, with a deferential “No” and courteous “Yes.” Let us take care to hide our foolish moods behind a certain show of cheerfulness. Let us avoid all sullen silences. We should find fresh and sprightly things to say. I must be fearful lest you find me dull, and you must dread to bore me any way. Let us knock gently at each other’s heart, glad of a chance to look within—and yet let us remember that to force one’s way is the unpardoned breach of etiquette. So we shall be host and hostess, until all need for entertainment ends. We shall be lovers when the last door shuts. But what is better still, we shall be friends.”

Benediction of the Apaches

"Now you will feel no rain,
For each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold,
For each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there is no more loneliness for you.
For each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two bodies,
But there is only one Life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place,
To enter into the days of your togetherness.
And may your days be good and long upon the earth"

Blessing for a Marriage – *by James Dillet Freeman*

“May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding. May you always need one another -- not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete. The valley does not make the mountain less, but more. And the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you. May you need one another, but not out of weakness. May you want one another, but not out of lack. May you entice one another, but not compel one another. May you embrace one another, but not out encircle one another. May you succeed in all-important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces. May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults. If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back. May you enter into the mystery that is the awareness of one another's presence -- no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities. May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy. May you have love, and may you find it loving one another.”

Blessing of the Hands

“These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow, and forever. These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together you build your future. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, and with the slightest touch, will comfort you like no other. These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief fills your mind. These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes; tears of sorrow, and tears of joy. These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children. These are the hands that will help you to hold your family as one. These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it. And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.”

Desiderata – *by Max Erhmann*

"Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams; it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy."

Friendship – by Judy Bielicki

“It is often said that it is love that makes the world go round. However, without doubt, it is friendship which keeps our spinning existence on an even keel. True friendship provides so many of the essentials for a happy life-it is the foundation on which to build an enduring relationship, it is the mortar which bonds us together in harmony, and it is the calm, warm protection we sometimes need when the world outside seems cold and chaotic. True friendship holds a mirror to our foibles and failings, without destroying our sense of worthiness. True friendship nurtures our hopes, supports us in our disappointments, and encourages us to grow to our best potential. (Bride) and (Groom) came together as friends. Today, they pledge to each other not only their love, but also the strength, warmth and, most importantly, the fun of true friendship.”

Hug O' War – by Shel Silverstein

"I will not play at tug o' war. I'd rather play at hug o' war, where everyone hugs instead of tugs, where everyone giggles, and rolls on the rug, where everyone kisses, and everyone grins, and everyone cuddles, and everyone wins.”

I Am Love

“Some say I can fly on the wind, yet I haven't any wings. Some have found me floating on the open sea, yet I cannot swim. Some have felt my warmth on cold nights, yet I have no flame. And though you cannot see me, I lay between two lovers at the hearth of fireplaces. I am the twinkle in your child's eyes. I am hidden in the lines of your mother's face. I am your father's shield as he guards your home. And yet... Some say I am stronger than steel, yet I am as fragile as a tear. Some have never searched for me, yet I am around them always. Some say I die with loss, yet I am endless. And though you cannot hear me, I dance on the laughter of children. I am woven into the whispers of passion. I am in the blessings of Grandmothers. I embrace the cries of newborn babies. And yet... Some say I am a flower, yet I am also the seed. Some have little faith in me, yet I will always believe in them. Some say I cannot cure the ill, yet I nourish the soul. And though you cannot touch me, I am the gentle hand of the kind. I am the fingertips that caress your cheek at night. I am the hug of a child. I am love.”

I Love You – by Roy Croft

“I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you, for the part of me that you bring out. I love you, for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart, and passing over all the foolish, weak things that you can't help dimly seeing there, and for drawing out, into the light, all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find. I love you, because you are helping me to make of the lumber of my life, not a tavern, but a temple. Out of the works of my every day, not a reproach, but a song. I love you, because you have done more than any creed could have done to make me good, and more than any fate could have done to make me happy. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it by being yourself. Perhaps that is what being a friend means, after all.”

Looking for Your Face – by Rumi

“From the beginning of my life I have been looking for your face, but today I have seen it. Today I have seen the charm, the beauty, the unfathomable grace of the face that I was looking for. Today I have found you, and those who laughed and scorned me yesterday are sorry that they were not looking as I did. I am bewildered by the magnificence of your beauty, and wish to see you with a hundred eyes. My heart has burned with passion and has searched forever for this wondrous beauty that I now behold. I am ashamed to call this love human, and afraid of God to call it divine. Your fragrant breath, like the morning breeze, has come to the stillness of the garden. You have breathed new life into me. I have become your sunshine, and also your shadow. My soul is screaming in ecstasy. Every fiber of my being is in love with you. Your effulgence has lit a fire in my heart, and you have made radiant for me the earth and sky. My arrow of love has arrived at the target. I am in the house of mercy, and my heart is a place of prayer.”

Love Is Friendship Caught Fire – by Laura Hendricks

"Love is friendship caught fire; it is quiet, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection, and makes allowances for human weaknesses. Love is content with the present, hopes for the future, and does not brood over the past. It is the day-in and day-out chronicles of irritations, problems, compromises, small disappointments, big victories, and working toward common goals. If you have love in your life, it can make up for a great many things you lack. If you do not have it, no matter what else there is, it is not enough."

Marriage Joins Two People in the Circle of Its Love – by Edmund O'Neill

“Marriage is a commitment to life, to the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other human relationship can equal; a joining that is promised for a lifetime. Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life’s most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other’s best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. There may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child. Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller; memories are fresher; commitment is stronger; even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly. Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing love through the seasons of life. When two people pledge to love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique to themselves, which binds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential, made in the hearts of two people who love, which takes a lifetime to fulfill.”

On Love – by Thomas a Kempis

“Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good. Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth. It bears every hardship as though it were nothing, and renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love is born of God. Love flies, runs and leaps for joy. It is free and unrestrained. Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds. Love feels no burden, takes no account of toil, attempts things beyond its strength. Love sees nothing as impossible, for it feels able to achieve all things. It is strange and effective, while those who lack love faint and fail. Love is not fickle and sentimental, nor is it intent on vanities. Like a living flame and a burning torch, it surges upward and surely surmounts every obstacle.”

Sonnet 17 – by Pablo Neruda

"I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz or arrow of carnations that propagate fire: I love you as certain dark things are loved, secretly, between the shadow and the soul. I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom, and carries hidden within itself the light of those flowers, and thanks to your love, darkly in my body lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth. I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where, I love you simply, without problems or pride: I love you in this way because I know no other way of loving but this, in which there is no I or you; so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand, so intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close."

Sonnet 18 – by William Shakespeare

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade
Which in eternal lines to time thou grow'st
So long as men can breathe and eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

Sonnet 116 – by William Shakespeare

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering barque
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken
Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come.
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved."

Sonnet XLIII – by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

"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 candle-light.
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's 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."

Sooner or Later

"Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines, and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favorite memories, and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all -- one known only by those who love."

The Art of a Good Marriage – by Wilferd Arlan Peterson

"A good marriage must be created.
In marriage the "little" things are the big things.
It is never being too old to hold hands.
It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.
It is never going to sleep angry.
It is having a mutual sense of values, and common objectives.
It is standing together and facing the world.
It is forming a circle that gathers in the whole family.
It is speaking words of appreciation, and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.
It is not only marrying the right person -- it is being the right partner."

The Hungering Dark – by Frederick Buechner

"Matrimony is called holy, because this brave and fateful promise of a man and a woman, to love and honor and serve each other through thick and thin, looks beyond itself to more fateful promises still, and speaks mightily of what human life at its most human and most alive and most holy must always be. Every wedding is a dream, and every word that is spoken there means more than it says, and every gesture - the clasping of hands, the giving of rings - is rich with mystery. And so it [is that] we hope with every bride and groom, that the love they bear one another, and the joy they take in one another, may help them grow in love for this whole world where their final joy lies."

The Hymn of the Universe – by Teilhard de Chardin

"Only love can bring individual beings to their perfect completion, as individuals, by uniting them one with another, because only love takes possession of them and unites them by what lies deepest within them. This is simply a fact of our everyday experience. For indeed at what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say that they are lost in one another? And is not love all the time achieving - in couples, in teams, all around us - the magical and reputedly contradictory feat of personalizing through totalizing? And why should not what is thus daily achieved on a small scale be repeated one day on world-wide dimensions?"

Humanity, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, of the one with the many: all these are regarded as utopian fantasies, yet they are biologically necessary; and if we would see them made flesh in the world what more need we do than imagine our power to love growing and broadening, till it can embrace the totality of human beings and of the earth?"

The Irrational Season – by Madeleine L'Engle

"Ultimately there comes a time when a decision must be made. Ultimately two people who love each other must ask themselves how much they hope for as their love grows and deepens, and how much risk they are willing to take. It is indeed a fearful gamble. Because it is the nature of love to create, a marriage itself is something which has to be created. To marry is the biggest risk in human relations that a person can take. If we commit ourselves to one person for life this is not, as many people think, a rejection of freedom; rather it demands the courage to move into all the risks of freedom, and the risk of love which is permanent; into that love which is not possession, but participation. It takes a lifetime to learn another person. When love is not possession, but participation, then it is part of that co-creation which is our human calling."

The Magic of Love – by *Helen Steiner Rice*

“Love is like magic, and it always will be,
For love still remains life's sweet mystery.
Love works in ways that are wondrous and strange,
And there's nothing in life that love cannot change!
Love can transform the most commonplace
Into beauty and splendor and sweetness and grace.
Love is unselfish, understanding and kind,
For it sees with its heart, and not with its mind.
Love is the answer that everyone seeks;
Love is the language that every heart speaks.
Love can't be bought, it is priceless and free.
Love, like pure magic, is life's sweet mystery!!”

The Merchant of Venice – by *William Shakespeare*

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, [Jew,]
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy."

The Prophet, On Children – by Kahlil Gibran

“And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, ‘Speak to us of Children.’ And he said, ‘Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself. They come through you, but not from you. And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love, but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies, but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward, nor tarries with yesterday. You are the bows from which your children, as living arrows, are sent forth. The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far. Let your bending in the Archer’s hand be for gladness, for even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.’”

The Prophet, On Love – by Kahlil Gibran

"Then said the student Almitra, Speak to us of love. And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them. And with a great voice he said: When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him, though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden. For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth."

The Prophet, On Marriage – by Kahlil Gibran

"Then Almitra spoke again and said, and what of Marriage master? And he answered saying: You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore. You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days. Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God. But let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another, but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other’s cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone."

The Prophet, You Were Born Together – by Kahlil Gibran

"You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore. You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days. Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God. But let there be spades in your togetherness. And let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another but make not a bond of love. Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other’s cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each of you be alone, even as the strings of the lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping. For only the land of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together, yet not too near together, for the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow."

Time In A Bottle – *by Jim Croce*

“If I could save time in a bottle, the first thing that I'd like to do, is to save every day 'till eternity passes away, just to spend them with you. If I could make days last forever; if words could make wishes come true; I'd save every day like a treasure and then, again, I would spend them with you. If I had a box just for wishes, and dreams that had never come true; the box would be empty, except for the memory of how they were answered by you. But there never seems to be enough time to do the things you want to do, once you find them. I've looked around enough to know that you're the one I want to go through time with.”