

Read the following poem and answer the questions about the poem. For this seminar exercise, you do not have to write in complete sentences or paragraphs (since you will not be graded on this). After the class has finished, be prepared to discuss your answers and ask any questions you wish to ask. You may not have enough time in seminar to answer all the questions below: you should try answering them on your own if you do not have time in class. This exercise is excellent preparation for part of the final exam.

Fatal Interview: V
Edna St. Vincent Millay

Of all that ever in extreme disease
“Sweet Love, sweet cruel Love, have pity!” cried,
Count me the humblest, hold me least of these
That wear the red heart crumpled in the side,
In heaviest durance, dreaming or awake,
Filling the dungeon with their piteous woe;
Not that I shriek not till the dungeon shake,
“Oh, God! Oh, let me out! Oh, let me go!”
But that my chains throughout their iron length
Make such a golden clank upon my ear,
But that I would not, boasted I the strength,
Up with a terrible arm and out of here
Where thrusts my morsel daily through the bars
This tall, oblivious gaoler eyed with stars.

1. In the poem, being in love is being compared to having a disease. What is the other major comparison for being in love? Why is the poem using these comparisons?
2. Who are these other people, “these | That wear the red heart crumpled in the side”?
3. Why is the poem describing the gaoler (jailer) as “eyed with stars”?
4. What is the effect of the final two rhyming lines in the poem?
5. What are the implications of the thirteenth line, especially the phrase “thrusts my morsel daily”?
6. Explain the importance of the use of enjambment at the end of one line.
7. Scan (by identifying the stresses, feet divisions, and feet names) the second line of the poem. Why is this an interesting line metrically?
8. Why does the speaker not want to leave, in spite of her shrieks?