

## Guiding Questions for Reading Poems about Love

The poems listed below are about different kinds of love and come from different eras and from authors of diverse backgrounds, yet they share many things. Use the following to begin to understand and discuss them.

- "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- "The Bean Eaters" by Gwendolyn Brooks
- "On My First Son" by Ben Jonson
- "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke

1. Poets usually create a speaker for their poems. Who is the speaker in the poem you are reading?
2. Who is the audience for the speaker's words? (The audience can be a particular person, but it can also be less specific than that.)
3. Underline striking or powerful details and diction (diction means word choice) in the poem.
4. What is the subject of the poem? In other words, what is the poem about? Answer this question in a sentence or two.
5. Judging from the details and diction you have identified, what is the tone of the poem? In other words, what is the speaker's attitude toward the subject of the poem? Some tone words are cheerful, bitter, mournful, somber, matter-of-fact, angry, nostalgic, and compassionate, but you may certainly use others. Be sure to include an explanation of why you have characterized the tone of the poem as you have.
6. Characterize the nature of love in the poem you are reading.