Love is What You Make It

What is love, and why do we make it such a priority? Many people go through extreme measures to find love. We have all seen or heard of those “find love” shows on television that display how desperate people are to find love. They would do almost anything to attain it. Why is love so desirable? In “Love is not all” by Edna St. Vincent Millay, Millay describes everything that love isn’t. She leaves it to us to define it but still describes the importance of this emotion. Love may not be a psychological need or medical care, but it’s something we all long for.

Love is difficult to define. Love can mean different things to every person. There are some people who don’t even believe in love. One definition I found is that love is “an affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests” (“Love”). This is a very simple definition for love. Since love is difficult to define, the dictionary has many definitions for it. Love can also be an attraction based on sexual desire (“Love”). This brings in the sexual side of love. Some people might confuse love and lust, but they are completely different. Lust is just sexual desire towards someone. When a person is in love, they are attracted to that person, but that’s not why they love them. Love is even defined in the bible. “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians. 13:4-8a). This is a great verse because it not only explains what love is but also
explains what love isn’t. Real love is patient and selfless, and one’s best life cannot be lived without it.

Although most people hope to find love in their life, it is true that love is not a necessity. “Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink/ Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain” (Millay ll 1-2). This quote explains that technically one can live without love. Love won’t get rid of a person’s hunger. It also won’t protect a person from the weather conditions. “Love cannot fill the thickened lung with breath/ nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone” (Millay ll 5-6). This quote explains that love isn’t a cure for a sickness. A person will need surgery and love won’t do anything for that. It will not fix a physical problem. Although love is a great trait, it will not solve every problem a person may have. These two quotes show that love isn’t a psychological need or a medical care.

Love may not be something we need to survive, but not having it can have a huge impact in a person’s life. The lack of love can affect people in many ways. “Yet may a man is making friends with death./ Even as we speak, for lack of love alone” (Millay ll 8-9). When a person is going through a hard time, having their significant other by their side makes things a whole lot better. This prevents people from feeling alone since they have someone’s support and unconditional love. A loved one can make a terrible situation a little less terrible because it won’t feel like they are fighting a battle on their own. If a person is going through a hard time and doesn’t have support from anyone it could be devastating. Some people actually want to end their lives because they haven’t found their true love. Not only do people feel alone without love but they might feel bad about themselves. “It well may be that in a difficult hour,/ Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,/ or nagged by want past resolution’s power, /I might be driven to sell your love for peace,/ or trade the memory of this night for food./ It well may be. I do not
think I would” (Millay ll 9-14). I think these last few stanzas really show the importance of love. Millay explained how love isn’t something that will save our lives but yet she wouldn’t trade it for something she does need. I can picture a man thinking of old memories and although he is hungry he refuses to trade them for food. This implies that love means more than something a person actually needs to survive. It’s also impactful because even the memories mean so much to a person. Even when relationships don’t work out the memories stay forever. Most people wouldn’t trade those memories even if the relationship ended badly. Another translation of these stanzas could be that he would prefer to die than to live without the memories of love. World peace is something everyone wishes for, but the narrator would prefer to have love. When given the choice between peace and love, the speaker highlights the importance of love. If real love was present, then peace would also be present.

Overall, this poem is a great depiction of love. I enjoy how Millay doesn’t necessarily say love is important or defines it. All Millay says and describes is what love is not. The poem shows how important love can actually become to an individual. Love is not the same to me as it is to the person next to me. Love has a different importance because it’s not as essential as food or water, but some people would choose love over the necessities. Although love isn’t essential to survive, love makes the horrible times better. It can make a dark day bright. Love can transform the pain and disappointment in this world. Love is what you make it.
Works Cited


http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/love

Millay, Edna St. Vincent. “Love is not all.” *Compact Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing*.
