

Name: _____ Class: _____

(love song, with two goldfish)

By Grace Chua
2003

Grace Chua is an award-winning journalist whose work usually deals with science and the environment. In this poem, Chua explores the love between two goldfish living in a fish bowl. As you read, take note of on the use of puns throughout the poem and their multiple meanings.

[1] (He's a drifter,¹ always
floating around her, has
nowhere else to go. He wishes
she would sing, not much, just the scales;
[5] or take some notice,
give him the fish eye.)

(Bounded by round walls
she makes fish eyes
and kissy lips at him, darts
[10] behind pebbles, swallows
his charms hook, line and sinker)²

(He's bowled over.³ He would
take her to the ocean, they could
count the waves. There,
[15] in the submarine silence, they would share
their deepest secrets. Dive for pearls
like stars.)

(But her love's since
gone belly-up. His heart sinks
[20] like a fish. He drinks
like a stone. Drowns those sorrows,
stares emptily through glass.)

(the reason, she said
she wanted)
[25] (and he could not give)
a life
beyond the
(bowl)



"goldfish" by Sayot is licensed under CC BY 2.0

1. A "drifter" is a person who is continually moving from place to place.
2. The phrase "hook, line, and sinker" refers to parts of a fishing line and is used to emphasize that someone has been completely duped or tricked.
3. "Bowled over" means to be affected with sudden wonder or surprise.

"(love song, with two goldfish)" from Quarterly Literary Review Singapore by Grace Chua. Copyright © 2003 by Grace Chua. Used by permission of Quarterly Literary Review Singapore. All rights reserved.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement identifies the central theme of the text?
 - A. Love can only be maintained with communication.
 - B. Love is difficult to sustain and often fades.
 - C. Love is often ruined by distance.
 - D. Love is ruined by wild promises that cannot be fulfilled.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "(He's a drifter, always / floating around her, has / nowhere else to go." (Lines 1-3)
 - B. "(He's bowled over. He would / take her to the ocean, they could / count the waves." (Lines 12-14)
 - C. "(But her love's since / gone belly-up. His heart sinks / like a fish." (Lines 18-20)
 - D. "(and he could not give) / a life / beyond the / (bowl)" (Lines 25-28)

3. PART A: How does the structure of the poem contribute to its meaning?
 - A. The first three stanzas show the male fish falling for the female fish, and the last two stanzas reveal his unanswered feelings.
 - B. The first three stanzas depict the growing love between the two fish, while the last two stanzas show why their love falls apart.
 - C. The first two stanzas show the male fish falling for the female fish, and the last three stanzas show why his feelings for her change.
 - D. The first two stanzas explore why the female fish loves the male fish, and the last three stanzas show why she moves on.

4. PART B: Which TWO quotes from the text best support the answer to Part A?
 - A. "(He's a drifter, always / floating around her, has / nowhere else to go." (Lines 1-3)
 - B. "He wishes / she would sing, not much, just the scales;" (Lines 3-4)
 - C. "darts / behind pebbles, swallows / his charms hook, line and sinker)" (Lines 9-11)
 - D. "Dive for pearls / like stars.)" (Lines 16-17)
 - E. "His heart sinks / like a fish. He drinks / like a stone." (Lines 19-21)
 - F. "(and he could not give) / a life / beyond the / (bowl)" (Lines 25-28)

5. How does the poet's use of puns, or words with multiple interpretations, contribute to the poem's meaning?

6. How does the poet's use of parentheses develop the poem's themes?

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In the context of the poem, what does it mean to feel alone? How can two people experience isolation despite living in the same home and being in the same relationship? What effect does one's expectations of a relationship have on feelings of isolation?

2. The title of this poem is "(love song, with two goldfish)." How is the love story between the fish similar to a love song? In the context of this poem, how are we changed by love?