

Examine how Duffy presents feelings of love in 'First Love' and 'Valentine' (25 marks)

In Duffy's poems 'First love' and 'Valentine' connections with feelings of love are very significant. Each poem focuses on love and relationships, such as 'First Love' talks about her first love and faithfulness and 'Valentine' shows vulnerability and sexual love. 'First love' presents a sense of nostalgia and emotions towards her first relationship she experienced in her youth, for example she reflects on how it was a 'dream' and time of uncertainty. Whereas in 'Valentine' Duffy expresses love through a Valentine's Day gift, claiming that it symbolised love in much more realistic way than rose or heart shape sweets.

In 'Valentine', Duffy uses an everyday ordinary object, 'an onion' which is an extended metaphor to present her deepest feelings and abstract thoughts. The juxtaposition of ordinary objects with her intense feelings serves to create the mood and tone of this particular work. On the opening line 'Not a red rose or a satin heart' the use of cacophony and plosive such as 'satin heart' and 'not a red rose' sounds as if this sentence is being spat and is negative, it is also straightforward. On line 2 the metaphor 'It is a moon wrapped in brown paper' shows that the speaker offers a gift that is entirely unconventional, she clearly finds it more appropriate as the moon symbolizes love, which links to the idea that lovers have often said they would give the moon if they could. Also the simile on line 5 'like the careful undressing of love' creates imagery and personification. The prefix 'undressing' implies something sexual and vulnerability. Line 6, allows the reader to picture the speaker handing the onion to her lover through the demand 'here. Cacophony is always used when she explains 'it will blind you with tears like a lover', this explains that the onion will do the same thing that a lover will do, implying love brings you tears and grief.

In 'First Love', Duffy opens with 'Waking, with a dream of first love forming real words, as close to my lips as lipstick, I speak your name'. 'Waking' emphasises on a sense of brand-new or fresh feeling - associated with 'first love' being a new feeling. 'Dream' is a reference to the surrealism that is associated with being in love for the first time. The 'dream' of love is the physical and mental attraction which is all the more heightened in first love perhaps to naivety. The simile and lateral 'lips as lipstick' creates an immediate attraction to their first love and sense of romantically/physically closeness symbolising a kiss. Throughout Stanza 1, enjambment and commas presents a fluidity in the work, this might be a representation of the narrator's feelings of the 'dream' state again or perhaps even the ease felt in first love. Duffy then goes on to highlighting the naivety in first love in stanza 2, showing a loss of innocence and ownership and the sense of youth in it through the line 'This was a child's love.' It also reminisces on memories, reflecting back on the first love and the 'old film' offers the idea of nostalgia.