‘Advice to a Girl’ is written by the 17th-century English poet Thomas Campion. This poem is in the form of advice to women about men. Campion suggests women never “love” a man if they cannot bear their “faults.” He gives a detailed commentary on the nature of man. Campion’s background as a composer is reflected in the musicality and [lyricism](https://poemanalysis.com/genre/lyricism/) of this piece. His use of language is elegant, simple, and straightforward. You can read the full poem below:

**Advice to a Girl**

Thomas Campion

Never love unless you can

Bear with all the faults of man!

Men sometimes will jealous be

Though but little cause they see,

And hang the head as discontent,

And speak what straight they will repent.

Men, that but one Saint adore,

Make a show of love to more;

Beauty must be scorned in none,

Though but truly served in one:

For what is courtship but disguise?

True hearts may have dissembling eyes.

Men, when their affairs require,

Must awhile themselves retire;

Sometimes hunt, and sometimes hawk,

And not ever sit and talk:—

If these and such-like you can bear,

Then like, and love, and never fear!

## Summary

In ‘Advice to a Girl,’ [Thomas Campion](https://poemanalysis.com/thomas-campion/biography/) straightforwardly advises women on the nature of men.

In this poem, Campion describes that a man can get jealous even without reason. They can get discontented and not talk about their feelings. Sometimes, the poet says they make a show of their love. According to him, courtship is a “disguise.” Sometimes, true hearts might have “dissembling eyes,” referring to the fake expressions. Lovers might disguise their true feelings under a smile. Lastly, the poet describes that men can hunt and hawk, but they cannot sit down and communicate with their partners. So, he warns women that they may think of a relationship with men if they can handle such behaviors.

**Structure**

‘Advice to a Girl’ consists of three [stanzas](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/stanza/). Each stanza contains three [rhyming](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/rhyme/) [couplets](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/couplet/) or a total of six lines. The [rhyme scheme](https://poemanalysis.com/definition/rhyme-scheme/) of the overall poem is AABBCC. For instance, in the first stanza, the rhyming pairs of words are: “can” and “man;” “be” and “see;” and “discontent” and “repent.” Besides, the poem is composed of [iambic trimeter](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/trimeter/) and iambic [tetrameter](https://poemanalysis.com/poetic-meter/tetrameter/). The first four lines of each section have three [iambs](https://poemanalysis.com/poetic-meter/iamb/), and the last two lines contain four iambs. There are no metrical variations as such.

**Literary Devices**

Campion makes use of the following literary devices in his poem ‘Advice to a Girl.’

* [**Alliteration**](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/alliteration/)**:**The poet uses alliteration in the following phrases, “**h**ang the **h**ead,” “**s**peak what **s**traight,” “**l**ike, and **l**ove,” etc.
* [**Anaphora**](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/anaphora/)**:**The poet begins the fifth and sixth lines of the first stanza with “And.” It is meant for the sake of emphasis.
* [**Rhetorical Question**](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/rhetorical-question/)**:**It occurs in the line, “For what is courtship but disguise?”
* [**Irony**](https://poemanalysis.com/figurative-language/irony/)**:**In the lines, “Men sometimes will jealous be/ Though but little cause they see,” Campion criticizes men for losing their temper over trivial matters.
* [**Personification**](https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/personification/)**:**In the second stanza, the poet personifies “love” as a “Saint.”

## Detailed Analysis

### Stanza One

Never love unless you can

Bear with all the faults of man!

Men sometimes will jealous be

Though but little cause they see,

And hang the head as discontent,

And speak what straight they will repent.

The [tone](https://poemanalysis.com/definition/tone/) of the poem, ‘Advice to a Girl,’ in the beginning, is instructional. Campion advises young women that they should not fall in love with a man lest they can put up with their faults. He elaborates on the nature of men in the rest of the poem. According to him, men sometimes get jealous about something without much reason. He also notes how they would hang their heads in discontent. Without mincing their words, they speak straight, and later they would repent their remarks. In this way, Campion gives a rough overview of how men lack reason and the right temperament. Therefore, girls have to be wise before loving men.

### Stanza Two

Men, that but one Saint adore,

Make a show of love to more;

Beauty must be scorned in none,

Though but truly served in one:

For what is courtship but disguise?

True hearts may have dissembling eyes.

In the second stanza, Campion states how most men are affectionate and crave love. They often make a show love in front of everyone. In the next line, he says that others’ beauty is belittled or scorned when one is in love with someone. A lover is often under the impression that pure beauty can exist only in the person he loves.

Lastly, the poet says that courtship is nothing but a disguise, a mask to hide one’s true emotions from others. He remarks, “True hearts may have dissembling eyes.” It means that no love is inherently pure. Lovers say so as they see love through veiled eyes without heeding to reality. So, this stanza is more about love and relationships rather than about the faults in men.

### Stanza Three

Men, when their affairs require,

Must awhile themselves retire;

Sometimes hunt, and sometimes hawk,

And not ever sit and talk:—

If these and such-like you can bear,

Then like, and love, and never fear!

In the last stanza of ‘Advice to a Girl,’ the [speaker](https://poemanalysis.com/diction/speaker-in-poetry/) describes how men will require their space when their “affairs” require. They often seek leisure and retire in their manly activities. Then they would go out hunting or hawking. Though they have time for such activities, they never have time just to sit down and talk with their loved ones.

In the end, the speaker warns women that if this is something that the girls can deal with, only then should they fall in love with men. Overall, the poet’s tone is instructive, guiding young women to [act](https://poemanalysis.com/definition/act/) wisely in matters of love.  
**Theme**

Throughout the poem, Campion describes the nature of men. The speaker seems to be self-aware. He narrates how men can be jealous without reason and pass foolish remarks. Yet, as Campion points out, most men like to show their affection and love boldly and openly. This poem also taps on the theme of courtship. It is described as a “disguise” to fake one’s true intentions. The speaker points out that lovers just see through veiled eyes and have not woken up to reality yet. In the end, the poet paints the flaws of men out as if they are unchangeable. Therefore, he advises young girls only to love them if they can bear the rash behaviors of men.

**Historical Context**

[Thomas Campion](https://poemanalysis.com/thomas-campion/biography/) was an English poet, musician, and physician. He wrote over a hundred lute songs and masques for dancing. Campion is best-known for his songbook, A Booke of Ayres, published in 1601. His works gained him a considerable reputation in his time. However, his works lost importance in the years following his death. His poem ‘Advice to a Girl’ is written in the [context](https://poemanalysis.com/definition/context/) of 17th-century England, especially for the courtly ladies who could choose their life partners. This poem contains a piece of advice for the ladies regarding the nature of men, their rashness, and follies.

# The Indifferent

# [JOHN DONNE](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-donne)

I can love both fair and brown,

Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays,

Her who loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays,

Her whom the country formed, and whom the town,

Her who believes, and her who tries,

Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,

And her who is dry cork, and never cries;

I can love her, and her, and you, and you,

I can love any, so she be not true.

Will no other vice content you?

Will it not serve your turn to do as did your mothers?

Or have you all old vices spent, and now would find out others?

Or doth a fear that men are true torment you?

O we are not, be not you so;

Let me, and do you, twenty know.

Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go.

Must I, who came to travail thorough you,

Grow your fixed subject, because you are true?

Venus heard me sigh this song,

And by love's sweetest part, variety, she swore,

She heard not this till now; and that it should be so no more.

She went, examined, and returned ere long,

And said, Alas! some two or three

Poor heretics in love there be,

Which think to ’stablish dangerous constancy.

But I have told them, Since you will be true,

You shall be true to them who are false to you.

### Introduction:

      This poem belongs to Donne's youth. During his twenties, he led a licentious life in London. The poem is included in the volume entitled 'Songs and Sonnets' published posthumously in 1633. The theme is the inconstancy of woman the same as that of Go and Catch. The title 'Indifferent' refers to the poet as a lover. He is indifferent to the physical appearance and the qualities of woman. All that he insists is that they should be faithless and inconstant. He is morally afraid of faithful and chaste women who will make a slave of him. The usual irony and banter is evident in this poem.

Summary:

      Stanza 1: Women are indifferent. They all have one common quality-inconstancy. The poet enjoys the love of all women, irrespective of their physical or mental aspects.

  I can love any woman, whether she be fair or brown. I can love a wealthy and lustful woman as much as a poor woman who sells her body. I can love a lonely woman as well as a woman who loves entertainments like masks and plays. I can love a country wench or a sophisticated urban girl. I can love a woman who believes my love or who wants to put my love to test. I can love a woman who is sentimental and tearful as also a woman who is stone-hearted and dry as a cork. I can love any woman provided she is not faithful or loyal.

      Stanza 2 : Will no other vice (except inconstancy) keep you happy ? Will you continue to follow the example of your mothers and be like them false and faithless ? Are you not bored with your old vices and do you want to find new vices ? Does the fear-that men are loyal and faithful in their love - prick your soul ? On, we men are not constant and you should also, like men, be inconstant. Let me know twenty women just as you as a woman know twenty lovers. I do not mind if you rob me (of my money) but I will not bind myself to any woman, I may undergo trouble and suffering but I shall not be your slave. I shall never be faithful though a woman may be constant to me.

      Stanza 3 : Venus the goddess of love and beauty according to the Roman myth - heard my song in praise of the inconstancy of woman and took an oath that variety is charming and that she would no more be constant and faithful. She went out to find if what the poet had said about woman's inconstancy was really true. She came back and reported: "Alas, there are two or three women who want to remain true and faithful in their love". But she has told them that variety is the spice of life. If they remain true, they will be true to men who are unfaithful to them. (Faithfulness both for man and woman is dangerous, according to the poet).

### Development of Thought:

      In the poem 'The Indifferent' John Donne believes that all women are faithless. He, admires this quality and regards it as a virtue. He can make love to any woman; he is not choosy about their physical or mental traits. The women may be fair or brown, lustful on account of affluence or corrupt on account of poverty. He does not care if the woman loves loneliness or likes cultural programmes and entertainments, so long as she is ready to accept him. He is indifferent to whether she is a village girl or a sophisticated urban lady. He does not care if she takes his love seriously or as fun. The lady may be sentimental and tearful or stone-hearted; it is just the same to him. He can love all sorts of women provIded they are not constant to him. He can excuse any fault or deficiency in a woman, but he cannot tolerate faithfulness on her part. He simply cannot love a faithful woman.

Constancy is Slavery:

      The poet regards constancy as a great vice which women should avoid. They have the example of their mothers who were as false and faithless as they are. Perhaps women think that men are constant and faithful and this makes women feel bad. They suffer from the stings of conscience. The poet assures such women that men are not constant and, therefore, they should follow the example of men. Women may cause the poet any amount of pain or sorrow and still he will love them. But he cannot agree to bind himself for ever to any woman. This kind of slavery he cannot stand. Even if a woman is faithful to him, he will not be faithful to her, because he likes variety in women.

Variety is Sweet:

      The poet thinks that Venus, the goddess of love has heard this song in praise of inconstancy. She agreed with him that variety is pleasant and sweet. She had never come across such an original concept. She assured the poet that in spite of his insistence on woman's constancy as a virtue there are only two or three in the world who would like to be faithful in love. Even if they do so, they would be faithful to men who are not loyal to them. When there are no constant men, why should there be any constant man ? It is better to enjoy a number of women and get the benefit of variety of love-making. Constancy is obnoxious and boring in life. The dialogue with Venus is quite interesting. She insists on "inconstancy among her followers; the few women who disobey her by being true shall be punished with false lovers." The poet rejects the plea that because men are faithful, women too should be faithful. He assures the ladies that men are as unfaithful as women. Inconstancy does not depend on sex. It is prevalent universally among both sexes. Let women rest assured that constancy is a vice. Let them give up their search for new vice.

### Critical Appreciation:

      The poem contains three stanzas of nine lines each. There is a regular rhyme scheme. What amazes the reader, is the poet's confession of his own fickleness in love. He can love any woman so long as she does not take him seriously. He would not commit or bind himself to any woman for love or money. He wants freedom of indulgence in sex. The paradox in the last stanza is rather cynical - the faithful woman will discover that her lover is false to her. One should not take this poem seriously. The immoral and jaded tone is in conformity with the social condition in the age of Donne.

**Sonnet 19: When I consider how my light is spent**

[JOHN MILTON](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-milton)

When I consider how my light is spent,

   Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,

   And that one Talent which is death to hide

   Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present

   My true account, lest he returning chide;

   “Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?”

   I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need

   Either man’s work or his own gifts; who best

   Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state

Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed

   And post o’er Land and Ocean without rest:

   They also serve who only stand and wait.”

### Lines 1-2

### *When I consider how my light is spent, Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,*

* The speaker thinks about how all of his light has been used up ("spent") before even half his life is over. As a man without light, he now lives in a world that is both "dark and wide."
* The first word of the poem, "When," gives us an idea of the structure of the sentence that will follow. The structure is, "When this happens, that happens." As in, "When I broke the glass, I had to find a broom to sweep it up."
* But be careful – the second part of the sentence doesn't come until lines 7 and 8. Milton's audience was more used to reading dense and complicated sentences, so you'll want to take the first seven lines slowly. (That's OK, we also think Milton's audience would have had a doozy of a time figuring out text messaging.)
* Most readers believe that the poem is clearly about Milton's blindness, but the poem never directly refers to blindness or even vision. Instead, we think that "light" is a metaphor for vision.
* The metaphor is complicated. The speaker says that his light can be "spent," and this word suggests that he is thinking of something like an oil lamp. The light is "spent" when the oil in the lamp runs out. To make a contemporary comparison, it would be like someone comparing his vision to a flashlight that runs out of batteries before it is supposed to. Milton is suggesting that he got a bad deal.
* The word "spent" also makes us think of money. Milton is reflecting on how he has used or "spent" his vision, now that it is gone. Has he used it wisely, or did he fritter it away because he thought it would never run out?
* The word "ere" means "before." How does Milton know that he became blind before his life was halfway over? For this to be true, wouldn't he have to be some kind of psychic who knew when he was going to die? The usual explanation of this line is that Milton guesses roughly how long he will live. Milton went completely blind at the age of 42.
* Finally, calling the world "dark and wide" makes it sound like a scary place, doesn't it? Interestingly, Milton makes it seem as if the world has run out of light, rather than growing dark because of any blindness on his part.

### Lines 3-4

*And that one Talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, […]*

* These lines are the trickiest in the entire poem, because they appear to be simpler then they are.
* The key word is "talent." You probably read "talent" and think of skills like throwing a perfect spiral or being a piano prodigy. But there's a double meaning intended for people who know history or Biblical scripture. In the ancient world, a "talent" was also a standard of weight used to measure money, just as a "pound" is a measure of both weight and currency.
* You can read [**Matthew 25**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2025&version=31) (it's short), but here's our brief summary of "The Parable of Talents." A lord gives three of his servants some money ("talents") to hold on to when he leaves for a trip. Two of the servants use the money to gain more money for their master. (In contemporary language, we'd call this 'investment.') But the third servant just buries the money, the ancient equivalent of hiding it under your mattress. When the lord returns, he's happy with the first two servants and gives them more responsibilities, but furious with the third servant. He exiles the third servant into the "darkness," which is the equivalent of "death."
* When Milton says that talent is "death to hide," he is referring to the money in the Biblical story and also to his own "talent," in the sense of a skill or trade.
* There is no way to tell what specific talent he means, but our guess would be his intelligence and his writing and reading skills, which he had used in service of Oliver Cromwell's government. This "talent" is "lodged" or buried within the speaker just like the money in the story. It cannot be used to make greater profit.

### Lines 4-6

*[…] though my Soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest he returning chide;*

* The speaker has just told us that his talent is as useless as money buried in the desert, but now he says that his uselessness has nothing to do with a lack of will. To the contrary, his soul desires (is "bent") to use his skills in the service of his "Maker," God.
* When he is faced with God, he wants to have a record of accomplishment to show Him.
* God is being compared with the lord from the "Parable of the Talents" in Matthew 25. When God "returns" to him like the master in the parable, the speaker wants to show that he has used his talents profitably.
* The word "account" here means both" story" and "a record of activities with money."
* If the speaker turns out to have wasted his profits, he worries that God will scold or "chide" him. And if God is anything like the lord from the parable, the speaker could get cast into a darkness even more fearful than the one created by his blindness.

### Lines 7-8

*"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"  
I fondly ask. […]*

* It has taken the speaker six lines to get through the part of the sentence that begins "When." Now he goes on to say what happens "when" he thinks about all the stuff he has described above. Namely, he wonders if God demands that people undertake hard, physical work, or "day-labour," when they don't have any light.
* The speaker doesn't have any light because he's blind, but in Milton's metaphor he compares this condition to having to do work at night that you would normally do during the day – like, say, building a house or plowing a field.
* The word "exact" means something like "charge," "claim," or "demand." You can "exact" a toll or a fee, for example. So the speaker wants to know if God demands work as a kind of payment that is due to Him.
* The first section of the poem is completed by the words "I fondly ask." The word "fondly" means "foolishly," not "lovingly." The speaker accuses himself of being a idiot for even thinking this question.
* Fortunately, "patience" steps in to prevent his foolishness. More on that in the next section

Lines 8-10

*[…] But patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best*

* "Patience" to the rescue! Patience is personified as someone who can talk sense into the speaker. Patience is often personified in Christian art because of its role in helping one to achieve important virtues like courage and wisdom.
* The speaker is about to "murmur" his foolish question about whether God would be so cruel as to make impossible demands of work, but then his patience steps in to stop him. The rest of the poem is the reply made by patience.
* First, patience points out that God does not *need* anything. God is complete and perfect. He doesn't need work or talents ("gifts") of any kind.

### Line 11

*Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. […]*

* Patience now scores its second point in the rebuttal to the speaker. Patience argues that those people are the best servants of God who allow their fates to be linked with and controlled by God, as if they were wearing a yoke.
* Essentially, this means accepting things as they come, especially suffering and misfortune.
* A "yoke" is a wood frame that is placed around the necks of farm animals, like oxen, so that they can be directed.
* Patience doesn't want to make God sound like a slave driver, so God's yoke is called "mild," or not-that-bad. It's not how much you have to show for your time on earth that counts, it's how you handle your submission to God.

### Lines 11-14

*[…] His state  
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed  
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:  
They also serve who only stand and wait."*

* The final point made by patience is that God is like a king, not a lord, so the "Parable of the Talents" does not strictly apply.
* Lords need everyone on their estates to work for them; they usually don't have the resources to spend on keeping servants just to stand around and wait on them. Kings, on the other hand, have unlimited resources, especially if they control a "state" as large as the entire earth.
* With His kingly status, God has plenty of minions to do His "bidding" by rushing from place to place – that is, doing things that require light and vision. It doesn't make a difference whether one more person fulfills the role or not.
* But kings also have people who "wait" on them, who stand in a state of readiness until their action is needed.
* To summarize, we believe that the sentence, "His state is kingly," is meant to contrast with the "lordly" state of the master of the Biblical parable in Matthew 25.
* This being Milton, of course, "wait" can also have the meaning of waiting for something to happen, as in, "I waited for the bus."
* What would the speaker be waiting for? The Second Coming of Jesus? The end of history? We don't know because the poem only suggests this meaning oh-so-vaguely.
* The word "post" here just means "to travel quickly." That's why the mail is often referred to as the "post," because you're supposed to travel quickly to deliver it.
* The poem ends with a vindication of the speaker's passivity, which has been forced on him by his blindness.