



**[eduresourceza.com](http://eduresourceza.com)**

## **Summary**

"Remember" is a Petrarchan sonnet.

The speaker addresses her beloved and encourages him to remember her after her death. She asks him to remember her even when his memory of her begins to fade. Eventually, the speaker gives this person her permission to forget her gradually because it is better to "forget and smile" than to "remember and be sad."

## **The octave**

The speaker reminds her beloved that when she is gone into the silent land of death, he will no longer hold her hand; he will no longer plan or speak of their future life together (seemingly her illness has prevented them from marrying); he will no longer be able to comfort and counsel her and pray for her. Her request of him is that, with all this that they will lose, he remember her. The theme is being remembered after death.

## **The sestet**

The narrator's tone changes in the sestet. The narrator even renounces the need to be remembered, which is ironic because the poem is titled "Remember." She wishes for her beloved to be happy, even if that means forgetting her. The narrator sacrifices her personal desire in an expression of true love.

## **Repetition**

Rossetti repeats the word "remember" throughout the entire poem, as if the narrator fears that her beloved will not heed her request.

The term 'remember' runs, like a refrain, throughout the sonnet. However, its power seems to decrease through the poem, rather as if the voice and memory of the speaker is fading from life:

- "Remember" is placed at the start, rather than the end, of the first and fifth lines
- In the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> lines.

## **Line 1**

*Remember me* – commanding tone

*when I am gone away* – euphemism for death. Creates the sense that she will not be gone forever. He will be with her via his memory.

## **Line 2**

*Gone far away* – she will not be able to return

*far* – emphasises distance between them

*into the silent land* - In Christianity, the phrase is a symbol for and an implied metaphor for death: going into the silent land is going into the land of death.

After she dies, she will no longer be able to communicate with her beloved. Thus, the afterlife will be a "*silent land*".

*the* - sense of certainty, no doubt that she is about to die.

*Silent* – can mean peacefulness (Heaven) but it can also relate to the idea of absence of others and general loneliness

### **Line 3**

*When you can no more hold me by the hand* –  
She has accepted that she is going to die.

She is telling her beloved to still remember her even when he can no longer (*no more*) hold her hand – emphasises their separation.

A symbol of first love (holding hands). This physical representation of love will be impossible once she is dead.

### **Line 4**

*half turn to go* – she is very ill and on the brink of death.

*yet turning stay* – She can no longer start to leave (die), but then turn back.

She does not have any control over death. Unlike any other journey, she cannot turn back. e.g. if she was going shopping, she would start to leave, she would turn back.

### **Line 5**

*Remember me* – She reminds him to remember her. This conveys her anxiety that he must not forget her.

*when no more* – euphemism for death

*day by day* – emphasises that he must remember her every day/ all the time.

### **Line 6**

*You tell me of our future that you planned* – She reminds him to remember when he is no longer able to tell her every day of the future he planned for them.

This future no longer exists. This conveys a sense of permanent loss.

*you planned* – Women in Victorian England were expected to be dominated by the man. This does not necessarily mean that that she had no say in the planning.

### **Line 7**

*Only remember me* – The speaker is telling him not to anything other than remember her. Anything more will be useless to her. The poem focuses on a natural mourning period, with no fancy gestures.

### **Line 8**

Downloaded from eduresourceza.com

*counsel* – advise. Prayers and counsel are needed when she is alive. They will be useless after she is dead.

She believed that after death the spiritual fate of the departed is sealed and cannot be changed.

### **Line 9**

*Yet* – introduces a change in her attitude. This is reinforced by the replacement of ‘remember’ with ‘forget’.

*For a while* – She is anticipating those times when life will intrude into his mourning and distract him. The demands of living will cause him to forget her. This is the momentary forgetfulness caused by the distractions of being alive.

By acknowledging that he might "*forget for a while*" is a sign of sincere love.

### **Line 10**

*And afterwards remember* – A softening of her attitude. She is more realistic. She accepts that he will not be able to mourn her all the time. She also realises that he not completely forget her.

do not grieve: She is consoling him. She knows that he will forget her even if it is just a little bit. She tells him not to be upset/feel guilty about it.

### **Line 11**

*darkness* – euphemism for death. She was a source of light in his life. Without her, there will be darkness in his life.

*corruption* – problems that he will face as a result of her death and his accepting her death. Refers to his emotional state after her death.

*and leave* – sign of hope

### **Line 12**

A vestige – Any trace of her memories

*of the thoughts that once I had* – The vestige of her thoughts are her poems. The speaker tells her beloved that if he forgets her, she will always be remembered by her words. So he should smile, not be sad.

### **Line 13**

*Better by far you should forget and smile*

This line emphasises the change in her tone & attitude. She even renounces the need to be remembered, which is ironic because the poem is titled "Remember."

Downloaded from eduresourceza.com

*Than that you should remember and be sad.*

She wishes for her beloved to be happy, even if that means forgetting her. She sacrifices her personal desire in an expression of true love.

There is a paradox in the resolution.

- The paradox is: remember me while you forget.
- The second paradox is represented by the conflict between "forget" and "smile." Forgetting would be to fail to honour her request, her love and his own love, yet she advises him that it is better to "forget and smile" while discouraging remembering and being sad

### **Themes**

- Death - the dying poetic speaker is preparing herself and her beloved for what is to come. She has been fighting to recover and renew her strength to stay alive. She foresees the time when her effort will fail and wants her beloved to be prepared, "you understand," for her death.
- Mortality and immortality - The speaker faces her mortality by accepting the pull of death "into the silent land."

### **Tone**

melancholy (quiet, contemplative sadness)

hopeful

selfless

acceptance - resigned tone

consoling

nostalgic (remembrance of a happy moment tinged with sadness) - sentimental

acceptance

tolerant (about death) - tolerates/understands the fact that she'll be forgotten

self-assurance (inner strength)