



LOVE LETTERS

“To write is to giftwrap packages of feelings, my feelings, to help them reach you through space, and through time without you.”

Yves Simon – *Sorties de nuit*, 1993

A Why do people write love letters?

Possible responses:

- Because your loved one is far away.
- Because you are afraid of the intensity of your feelings.
- Because beautiful feelings require beautiful words, and saying what you feel out loud would not be as effective.
- Because you want to leave a tangible expression of your feelings.

B Have you ever written a love letter?

Personal response.

WRITE A LOVE LETTER OF APPROXIMATELY 200 WORDS

You can address it to the person of your choice (a boyfriend or girlfriend, a friend, parent, brother or sister...)

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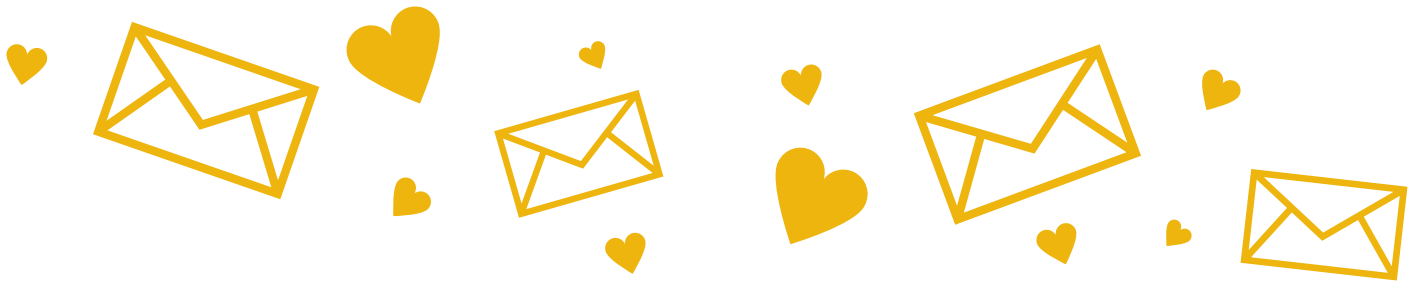
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FOUR LOVE LETTERS



[“[...] It is not because of the love you had for me that I loved you. How many others have loved me more who have not just made me look up from my books! It is not because of the beautiful words that you know how to say to women; I have certainly met other fine talkers who have not only distracted my ear. It is not because I relied on the happiness or glory, or only on affection. I despise false goods, and I knew when giving myself to you that the river of the world would still separate us. I knew that those who are ambitious only love for an hour a day and that love is a day in their lives. I loved you because I like you, because no one else can please me. I love you because when I imagine greatness, wisdom, strength and beauty, it is your image that appears before me, because your name is the only one that makes me shiver and the memory of you is the only one that does not disappear like a shadow from my memory. [...]”

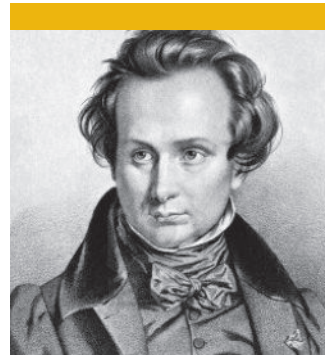
George Sand, January 23, 1837



“To have known and loved you with such profound devotion, to have had you for a part of my life, the only part I now consider beautiful, is enough for me. My passion is at a loss for words, but you can understand me, you alone. Our souls were made for one another and by knowing yours through love, mine has transcended many evils, understood perfection, and entered into the divine essence of things.

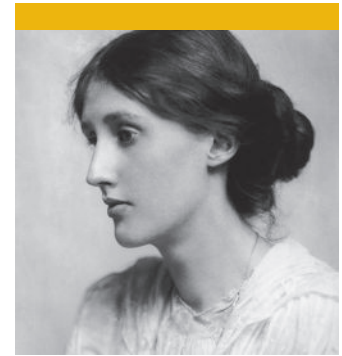
Pain, if it comes, cannot last for ever, surely one day you and I will meet again, and though my face be a mask of grief and my body worn out by solitude, you and you alone will recognize the soul which is more beautiful for having met yours, the soul of the artist who found his ideal in you, of the lover of beauty to whom you appeared as being flawless and perfect. Now I think of you as a golden-haired [...], with Christ’s own heart in you. I know now how much greater love is than anything else. You have taught me the divine secret of the world.”

Oscar Wilde, May 1895



“Then is it true you love me, [...]? Tell me, may I put faith in that most ravishing idea? Does it not strike you that I might become mad with joy if I could pass my whole life at your feet, sure of making you as happy as I should be myself; sure of being adored by you, even as I adore you? Oh! your letter has given me back peace; your words this evening filled me with happiness. Receive my thanks a thousand times; [...], my beloved angel, I should like to kneel before you as I would before a divinity. How happy you have made me! Adieu, adieu! I shall have a happy night dreaming of you.”

Victor Hugo, January 1820



“Your letter from Trieste came this morning—But why do you think I don’t feel, or that I make phrases? ‘Lovely phrases’ you say which rob things of reality. Just the opposite. Always, always, always I try to say what I feel. [...] I have missed you. I do miss you. I shall miss you. And if you don’t believe it, you’re a long-eared owl and ass. [...]”

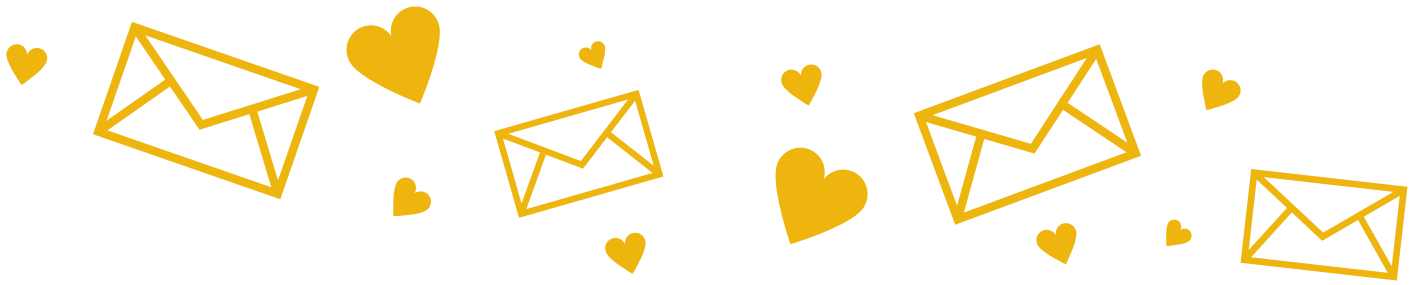
Virginia Woolf, January 26, 1926.

Image credits:

- 1 Portrait of George Sand by Auguste Charpentier (1838) coll. Musée de la Vie romantique, Paris. Public domain.
- 2 Portrait of Oscar Wilde by Alfred Ellis & Valerie (1892). Public domain.
- 3 Portrait of Victor Hugo as a young man. Public domain.
- 4 Portrait of Virginia Woolf by George Charles Beresford (1902). Public domain.

Bibliography:

- 1 Sand, G. (2004). *Lettres d’une vie*. Paris: Gallimard.
- 2 Wilde, O (2000). *The complete letters of Oscar Wilde*. London: Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis.
- 3 Hugo, V. (1901). *Lettres à la fiancée, 1820-1822 : oeuvres posthumes*. Paris: E. Fasquelle.
- 4 Sackville-West, V., de Salvo, L., Laeska, M. (2001). *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*. Berkeley: Cleis Press.

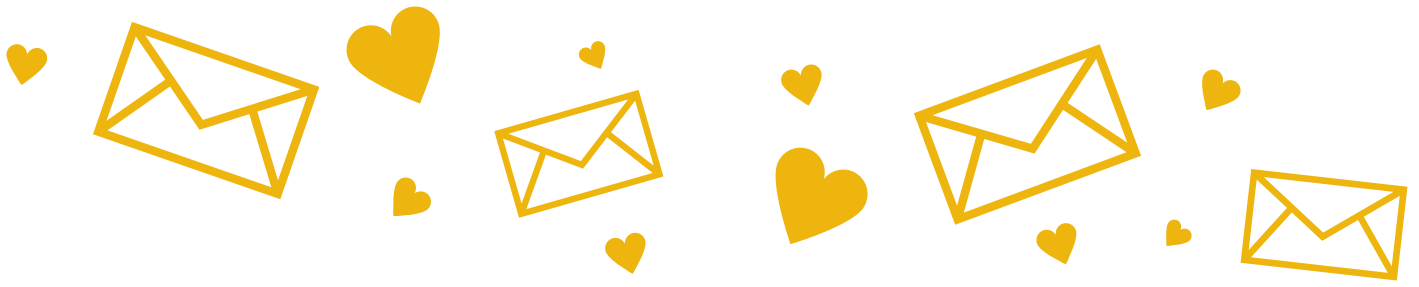


C On the previous page, you found a selection of love letters written by famous authors who excel at marrying two passions beautifully: love and writing. After reading the letters, complete the following tables:

RECIPIENTS		
A LETTER FROM	WRITTEN TO *	JUSTIFICATION
Georges Sand	Michel de Bourges (1797-1853)	<i>Date, style, cultural origin of recipient, other clues, guessing?</i>
Oscar Wilde	Alfred Douglas (1870-1945)	
Victor Hugo	Adèle Foucher (1803-1868)	
Virginia Woolf	Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962)	

***The recipients include:**
 Michel de Bourges (1797-1853); Adèle Foucher (1803-1868); Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962); Alfred Douglas (1870-1945)

HOW CAN YOU EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS USING IMAGERY?		EXAMPLES IN THE LETTER BY GEORGE SAND	EXAMPLES IN THE LETTER BY OSCAR WILDE	EXAMPLES IN THE LETTER BY VICTOR HUGO	EXAMPLES IN THE LETTER BY VIRGINIA WOOLF
Vocabulary		<i>love, happiness, glory, affection, greatness, wisdom, strength, beauty, shiver</i>	<i>profound, devotion, passion, souls, perfection, pain, beauty</i>	<i>ravishing, mad, joy, adore, angel, kneel before you, divinity</i>	<i>always, feel, miss</i>
Punctuation		<i>look up from my books!</i>	<i>rhythm intensifies with the use of commas</i>	<i>you love me? ravishing idea? I adore you? Oh!</i>	<i>I make phrases? always, always, always</i>
Images	Comparison	<i>like a shadow</i>	<i>golden-haired boy</i>	<i>as I would before a divinity</i>	<i>X</i>
	Metaphor	<i>river of the world</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>my beloved angel</i>	<i>an owl an ass</i>



REWRITE YOUR LOVE LETTER ON THIS PAGE

As you do so, try to improve it using vocabulary, punctuation, comparisons and metaphors you noticed in the letters written by famous authors. Once you have done this, rewrite your good copy on a sheet of white paper. Remember to keep your work neat!

A large rectangular area enclosed by a dashed orange border, containing 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing.