

Suggested civil ceremony readings



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

A good wedding cake

4lb of love
1lb butter of youth
1/2lb of good looks
1lb of sweet temper
1lb blindness of faults
1lb of self-forgetfulness
1lb of pounded wit
1lb of good humour
2 tablespoons of sweet argument
1 pint rippling laughter
1 wine glass of common sense
1oz of modesty

Put the love, good looks and sweet temper into a well-furnished house. Beat the butter of youth to a cream and mix well with the blindness of faults. Stir the pounded wit and good humour into the sweet argument, and then add the rippling laughter and common sense.

Work the whole together until everything is well mixed and then bake gently for ever. Author unknown

Extract from a Native American wedding ceremony

May the sun bring you new happiness by day;
May the moon softly restore you by night;
May the rain wash away your worries
And the breeze blow new strength into your being,
And all the days of your life
May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty.
Now you will feel no rain,
For each of you will be warmth for the other.
Now there will be no more loneliness.
Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling
To enter the long days of your life together,
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

The tribal wish of the Iroquois Indian

May you have a safe tent
And no sorrow as you travel.
May happiness attend you in all your paths.
May you keep a heart like the morning,
And may you come slow to the four corners
Where man says goodnight.

A walled garden

"Your marriage", he said, "Should have within it
A secret and protected place, open to you alone.
Imagine it to be a walled garden,
Entered by a door to which only you have the key.
Within this garden you will cease to be a mother, father, employee,
Homemaker or any other roles which you fulfil in daily life.
Here you are yourselves, two people who love each other.
Here you can concentrate on one another's needs.
So take my hand and let us go back to our garden.
The time we spend together is not wasted but invested.
Invested in our future and the nurture of our love".

Anon

A red red rose

O my luv's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O my luv's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonny lass,
So deep in luv am I,
And I will luv thee still, my dear,
Till a' the sea gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
I will luv thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luv,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my luv,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

Robert Burns

Extract from Les Miserables

You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving
The great acts of love are done by those
Who are habitually performing small acts of kindness
We pardon to the extent that we love
Love is knowing that even when you are alone,
You will never be lonely again
And great happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved
Loved for ourselves
And loved in spite of ourselves

Victor Hugo

How do I love thee?

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
for the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight,
I love thee freely, as men strive for right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.

Elizabeth Barrett-Browning

Friendship

It is often said that it is love that makes the world go round.
However, without doubt, it is friendship which keeps our spinning existence on an even keel.

True friendship provides so many of the essentials for a happy life - it is the strong foundation on which to build an enduring relationship, it is the mortar which bonds us together in harmony, and it is the calm, warm protection we sometimes need when the world outside seems cold and chaotic.

True friendship holds a mirror to our foibles and failings, without destroying our sense of worthiness. True friendship nurtures our hopes, supports us in our disappointments, and encourages us to grow to our best potential.

.....(name).....and.....(name). came together as friends.

Today, they pledge each to each other, not only their love, but also the strength, warmth and, most importantly the fun of true, true friendship.

Ceremony reading - Love

Love is enduring
And patient and kind,
It judges all things
With the heart, not the mind.
And love can transform
The most commonplace,
Into beauty and splendour
And sweetness and grace.
For love is unselfish,
Giving more than it takes.
And no matter what happens
Love never forsakes.
It's faithful and trusting
And always believing.
Guileless and honest
And never deceiving.
Yes, love is beyond
What man can define,
For love is immortal
And the gift is divine.

I knew that I had been touched by love

I knew that I had been touched by love the first time I saw you,
and I felt your warmth, and I heard your laughter.
I knew that I had been touched by love when I was hurting from
something that happened,
and you came along and made the hurt go away.
I knew that I had been touched by love when I quit making plans with my friends,
and started dreaming dreams with you.
I knew that I had been touched by love when suddenly I stopped
thinking in terms of 'me',
and started thinking in terms of 'we'.
I knew that I had been touched by love when suddenly I couldn't
make any decisions by myself anymore,
and I had the strong desire to share everything with you.
I knew that I had been touched by love the first time we spent alone
together, and I knew that I wanted to stay with you forever because
I had never felt this touched by love.

Unknown

Love is enough

Love is enough: though the world be a-waning,
And the woods have no voice but the voice of complaining.
Though the skies be too dark for dim eyes to discover,
The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder.
Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark wonder,
And this day draw a veil over all deeds passed over.
Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter,
The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter.
These lips and these eyes of the loved and the love.

William Morris

I promise

I promise to give you the best of myself
and to ask no more than you can give.
I promise to respect you as your own person and to realise that your
interests, desires and needs are no less important than my own.
I promise to share with you my time and my attention
and to bring joy, strength and imagination to our relationship.
I promise to keep myself open to you, to let you see through the
window of my world into my innermost fears and feelings,
secrets and dreams.
I promise to grow along with you, to be willing to face changes in
order to keep our relationship alive and exciting.
I promise to love you in good times and in bad, with all I have to give
and all I feel inside in the only way I know how.
Completely and forever.

Dorothy R Colgan

Shall I compare thee?

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summers lease hath all too short a date.
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance, or natures changing course untrimmed,
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time though grow'st
So long as man can breathe or eyes can see
So long lives this and gives life to thee.

William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments,
Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! It is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown although his height be taken.
Love's not times fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickles' compass come.
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor man ever loved.

William Shakespeare

On Your Wedding Day

Today is a day you will always remember
The greatest in anyone's life
You'll start off the day just two people in love
And end it as husband and wife.
It's a brand new beginning, the start of a journey
With moments to cherish and treasure
And although they'll be times when you both disagree
These will surely be outweighed by pleasure
You'll have heard many words of advice in the past
When the secrets of marriage were spoken
But you know that the answers lie hidden inside
Where the bond of true love lies unbroken
So live happy forever as lovers and friends
It's the dawn of a new life for you
As you stand there together with love in your eyes
From the moment you whisper 'I do'
And with luck all your hopes and your dreams can be real
May success find its way to your hearts
Tomorrow can bring you the greatest of joys
But today is the day it all starts

Anon

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat.
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Wrapped up in a five pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"Oh lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love
What a beautiful pussy you are, you are, you are!
What a beautiful pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! Too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows,
And there in a wood a Piggy-Wig stood,
With a ring at the end of his nose, his nose, his nose!
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand
They danced by the light of the moon, the moon, the moon
They danced by the light of the moon.

Edward Lear

The Art of Marriage

A good marriage must be created,
In the marriage the little things are the big things.
It is never being too old to hold hands.
It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.
It is never going to sleep angry.
It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.
It is standing together and facing the world.
It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.
It is speaking words of appreciation and gratitude in thoughtful ways.
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.
It is not only marrying the right person,
It is being the right partner.

Wilfred A. Peterson

My true love hath my heart

My true love hath my heart and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given.
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss:
There was never a better bargain driven.
My true love hath my heart and I have his.
His heart in me, keeps him and me in one.
My heart in him, his thoughts and senses guides;
He loves my heart, for once it was his own:
I cherish his, because in me it bides
My true love hath my heart and I have his.

Sir Philip Sidney

Your love is a beautiful thing

Your love is a beautiful thing -
For like a rose, it will blossom, growing more lovely from this,
your wedding day, through every day of the rest of your lives.
And every sunrise will bring you a new day to explore together,
a new day of joys to discover and share...
Your love is a beautiful thing, for as you travel through life together,
it will open your eyes to the whole wide world around you...
You will find something wonderful in everything you see -
In the blueness of the sky and the colours in a leaf, for there is beauty
in even the most ordinary things when there is beauty in the heart...
What a world of beauty waits for you within life's simplest things -
Within the touch of a familiar hand, the warmth that lights a special smile....
And what could be more beautiful than a lifetime spent together –
Caring and sharing, hoping and planning, helping each other through
all that life brings...
Yes, your love is a beautiful thing -
And beautiful, too, is the happiness that you two share as you begin
your life together.

Marriage

Marriage is one long conversation, chequered by disputes.
The disputes are valueless; they but ingrain the difference;
the heroic heart of woman prompting her at once to nail her
colours to the mast. But the intervals, almost unconsciously,
and with no desire to shine, the whole material of life is turned
over and over, ideas are struck out and shared, the two persons
more and more adapt their notions one to suit the other, and in
process of time, without sound of trumpet, they conduct each other
into new worlds of thought.

Robert Louis Stevenson

The confirmation

Yes yours, my love, is the right human face,
I, in my mind, had waited for this long.
Seeing the false, and searching for the true.
Then found you, as a traveller finds a place
of welcome, suddenly, amid the wrong
valleys and rocks and twisting roads.
But you, what shall I call you?
A fountain in waste, a well of water in a country dry,
or anything that's honest and good.
An eye that makes the whole world bright.
Your open heart, simple with giving, gives the primal deed.
The first good world, the blossom, the blowing seed.
The hearth, the steadfast land, the wandering sea.
Not beautiful or rare in every part,
but like yourself, as they were meant to be.

Edwin Muir

Wedding rings

Engagement rings may vary as to price and size and kind –
Diamonds, sapphires, pearls and rubies, many types you find.
But wedding rings all look alike in platinum or gold,
No matter what they cost to buy, or whether new or old.
They all look very much the same upon a woman's hand –
Plain and unpretentious, just a simple little band.
Yet everyone is different, for everyone you see
Has a story of its own, a secret history.
The tiny hoop, although so small,
holds all the world for two, enclosing
them within the circle of a dream come true.

Anon

The Day

May this be the start of a happy new life
that's full of special moments to share.
May this be the first of your dreams coming true
and of hope that will always be there...
May this be the start of a lifetime of trust
and of caring that's just now begun...
May today be a day that you'll always remember
the day when your hearts became one...

Anon