

Directions: Read the two translations of fragment #31 by Sappho. In an essay of at least five paragraphs, compare and contrast these two versions. How do they each support the themes of jealousy and/ or love?

What imagery, metaphor, simile, and other literary devices support the theme? Which form best supports the theme as well?

How do the lines appear on the page? Are the lines enjambed or end stopped?

As you compare the two versions of this poem, consider one to two other poems from *If Not, Winter*. How would you describe Sappho's style?

Finally discuss which version (Carson or Barnstone) seems best.

Remember to give your essay a title. Be sure to use quotation marks around the words or lines of the poem when you refer to them. **You may use a dictionary, *If Not, Winter*, poems, and notes for this essay. Please do not use the internet or outside sources for the discussion. This is a "readers response" essay.**

Checklist:

- ✓ Compare and contrast the two translations of Sappho's poem
- ✓ Write at least 5 paragraphs
- ✓ Discuss the themes of jealousy and / or love
- ✓ Discuss imagery and other literary devices and how they support the theme
- ✓ Give your essay a title!
- ✓ It should have a **thesis** which includes a topic and comment and discuss the **significance** of the thesis.
- ✓ It should have **topic sentences**.
- ✓ It should refer to the voice in the poem as the speaker.
- ✓ When writing out the quotes of the poem, remember to use a / (slash) to show the line break.

#31(translated by Anne Carson: *If Not, Winter*)

He seems to me equal to the gods that man
whoever he is who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking

and lovely laughing — oh it
puts the heart in my chest on wings
for when I look at you, even a moment, no
speaking
is left in me

no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead — or almost
I seem to me.

But all is to be dared, because even a person
of poverty

Sappho. *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*.
Translated by Anne Carson, Vintage Books, 2002.

#31 (translated by Willis Barnstone, 1988)

To me he seems like a god
as he sits facing you and
hears you near as you speak
softly and laugh

in a sweet echo that jolts
the heart in my ribs. For now
as I look at you my voice
is empty and

can say nothing as my tongue
cracks and slender fire is quick
under my skin. My eyes are dead
to light, my ears

pound, and sweat pours over me.
I convulse, greener than grass,
and feel my mind slip as I
go close to death,

yet, being poor, must suffer
everything.

Sappho. "Sappho's Fragment 31." Translated by Willis
Barnstone, *The Slow Room*, 31 May 2015,
theslowroom.com/2015/05/31/sapphos-fragment-31/

