

Handout 2: D'Aragona on the Infinity of Love

Tullia d'Aragona, born in Rome around the turn of the 16th century, was a philosopher, poet, and *cortegiana honesta* [honorable courtesan], or a sex worker, recognized and praised for her intellectual abilities. In this excerpt from her *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love*, she argues that love is infinite.

The original 16th century text is in the left-hand column, with a colloquial translation in the right-hand column. Read both, and note any questions you have about the translation.

Excerpt from Tullia d'Aragona's <i>Dialogue on the Infinity of Love</i> (1547) <i>Tullia d'Aragona is speaking, stating her view to her interlocutor, Varchi.</i>	
Original	Translation
Love is infinite potentially—not in actuality—for it is impossible to love with an end in sight.	Love goes on forever. There is no limit to loving.
1. That love goes on forever implies that you can always love more. Is there something you love that you can't imagine loving more?	
In other words, the desires of people in love are infinite, and they can never settle down after achieving something. This is because after obtaining it, they long for something else, and something else again, and something more after that. And so it goes on, one thing after the other.	Lovers are not satisfied after getting what they want. Because after getting what they want, they want something else, and something after that, and on and on.

2. Do you think people are satisfied after getting what they want? What is it about the nature of love that causes a lover to never be satisfied?

They can never be satisfied [...] This is the reason why people who are in love can be crying one minute and laughing the next. They can even be found laughing and crying at the same time.

They can never be satisfied. People in love are on an emotional rollercoaster. They may even laugh and cry at the same time.

3. How does never being satisfied lead to an emotional rollercoaster?

Reflect:

4. Are Romeo and Juliet like the lovers d'Aragona describes? Are they never satisfied? Does the play end in tragedy *because* they are never satisfied?