

The Many Wines

by Rumi
translated by Coleman Barks

God has given us a dark wine so potent that,
drinking it, we leave the two worlds.

God has put into the form of hashish a power
to deliver the taster from self-consciousness.

God has made sleep so that
it erases every thought.

God made Majnun love Layla so much that
just her dog would cause confusion in him.

There are thousands of wines
that can take over our minds.

Don't think all ecstasies
are the same!

Jesus was lost in his love for God.
His donkey was drunk with barley.

Drink from the presence of saints,
not from those other jars.

Every object, every being,
is a jar full of delight.

Be a connoisseur,
and taste with caution.

Any wine will get you high.
Judge like a king, and choose the purest,
the ones unadulterated with fear,
or some urgency about "what's needed."

Drink the wine that moves you
as a camel moves when it's been untied,
and is just ambling about.



Historical and cultural context

Jalal ad-Din Rumi (aka Rumi) was a 13th-century Sufi poet and mystic. Rumi was also a professor, husband and father. Sufism is a mystical branch of Islam, a religion which emerged in Arabia in the 7th century at a time when excessive wealth from the spice trade, overuse of alcohol and other behaviours were affecting family relationships and tribal customs. The Qur'an (the holy book for Islam) says of wine and gambling, "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." Many Islamic societies went on to adopt formal rules against alcohol use. But like all major religions, there has always been great variation in beliefs and behaviours among followers of Islam. [[pdf student handout](#)]

Instructional strategies

1. Read *The Many Wines* and discuss it as a class. You might use the following questions:
 - a. What might Rumi include among the “many wines?” Link your answer to specific elements of the text.
 - b. What does Rumi mean by “Be a connoisseur, and taste with caution?” What other advice does he provide?
 - c. In what ways might Rumi’s historical and cultural context impact this poem? How does his perspective relate to our historical and cultural context?
2. Many poems (including song lyrics) feature messages about alcohol or other drug use. You might ask students to select a poem or song that addresses the benefits and/or risks of alcohol or other drug use and compare and contrast it with *The Many Wines*.
3. Have students write a poem about a psychoactive substance (e.g., coffee, cola, tea, chocolate, alcohol, tobacco, cannabis) that reflects insight into the associated benefits and/or risks and/or provides advice related to the use of that substance.

Curricular competencies

- Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral and visual texts, guide inquiry, and extend thinking
- Think critically, creatively and reflectively to explore ideas within, between and beyond texts
- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social and cultural contexts, values and perspectives in texts
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text and world
- Respond to text in personal, creative and critical ways

Drug literacy objectives

- Assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and well-being of individuals, communities and societies
- Explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- Develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs
- Develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks and harms related to drugs