

Summary of *Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments* by Sappho

Introduction

Sappho, an ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, is renowned for her lyrical poetry, much of which centers on themes of love, desire, and the divine. Often regarded as one of the greatest poets of antiquity, Sappho's work survives only in fragments, yet her influence on Western literature and art is profound.

This Penguin Classics edition, *Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments*, introduces readers to Sappho's world through a collection of her surviving fragments and poems. The foreword by **Carol Ann Duffy** provides a modern reflection on Sappho's legacy and her relevance to contemporary audiences.

Themes in Sappho's Poetry

- **Love and Desire**

Sappho's work is characterized by an intense focus on love and longing, often addressing the complex emotions tied to human relationships.

- **Key Points:**

- Sappho writes of both the joy and the pain of love, making her work deeply personal yet universal.
 - Love is portrayed as a divine force, sometimes overwhelming and destructive.
 - **Example Fragment:** > "Love shook my soul,
> like the wind buffeting oak trees on a mountain."
-

- **Nature and the Divine**

Sappho frequently intertwines images of nature with the divine, depicting the gods as integral to the beauty and chaos of life.

- **Key Points:**

- Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is a central figure in many of her poems.
- Nature is often used metaphorically to represent emotions and desires.

- **Example Fragment:** > "Come to me now,
> release me from my pain,
> fulfill all that my heart desires.
> Be my ally."
-

- **Femininity and Community**

Sappho's poetry provides a glimpse into the lives of women in ancient Greece, including their relationships and the emotional bonds they shared.

- **Key Points:**

- Sappho's work celebrates female beauty and the emotional intimacy of female friendships.
 - Her poetry often reflects the communal life of women, particularly in the context of music, dance, and rituals.
-

Structure and Style

- **Fragmentary Nature**

Much of Sappho's work survives only in fragments due to the loss of ancient manuscripts over time. These fragments, though incomplete, retain a timeless beauty.

- **Example Fragment:** > "Someone will remember us
> even in another time."

- **Lyrical and Musical Qualities**

Sappho's poems were originally composed to be sung, accompanied by the lyre. Her use of meter, especially the Sapphic stanza, reflects her mastery of musicality.

Sappho's Legacy

- **Influence on Western Literature**

Sappho's influence is evident in the works of later poets and writers, who have drawn inspiration from her vivid imagery and emotional depth.

- **Modern Interpretations**

Contemporary audiences often interpret Sappho's poetry through the lens of modern feminism and LGBTQ+ identity, celebrating her as a symbol of love and individuality.

Key Takeaways

- **Themes:** Love, nature, femininity, and the divine dominate Sappho's poetry.
 - **Style:** Her lyrical, emotional, and fragmentary style highlights the beauty of incompleteness.
 - **Legacy:** Sappho's work has inspired writers and readers for centuries, underscoring the universal nature of human emotions.
-

Memorable Quotes

*"You may forget but
let me tell you this:
someone in some future time
will think of us."*

*"Although they are only breath, words
which I command
are immortal."*

*"The moon shone full
and the women stood
as though around an altar."*

Conclusion

Sappho's *Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments* captures the essence of her poetic genius, allowing readers to connect with the timeless emotions and themes she explored. Despite the fragmentary nature of her surviving work, her poetry continues to resonate, offering profound insights into love, beauty, and the human experience.