

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_



# Harkness Discussion:



## The Relationship between Desire and Love

The following packet presents a number of different perspectives on the relationship between desire and love. Before you start reading, fill out the attached "Discussion Prep Sheet." Bring this sheet to the discussion, along with your annotated articles.

### Desire

*Noun* - a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen.

"a desire to work in the dirt with your bare hands"

*synonyms:* wish, want;

*Verb* - strongly wish for or want (something).

"he never achieved the status he so desired"

*synonyms:* wish for, want, long for, yearn for, crave, set one's heart on, hanker after/for, pine for/after, thirst for, itch for, be desperate for, be bent on, have a need, covet, aspire to;

### Love

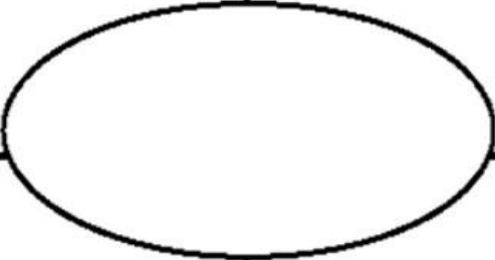
*Noun* - a feeling of strong or constant affection for a person; physical attraction - the strong affection felt by people who have a romantic relationship; a person you love in a romantic way. Love encompasses a variety of strong and positive emotional and mental states, ranging from the most sublime virtue or good habit, the deepest interpersonal affection and to the simplest pleasure.

*Verb* (used with object), loved, lov·ing. - to have love or affection for: All her pupils love her. to have a profoundly tender, passionate affection for (another person). to have a strong liking for; take great pleasure in: to love music.

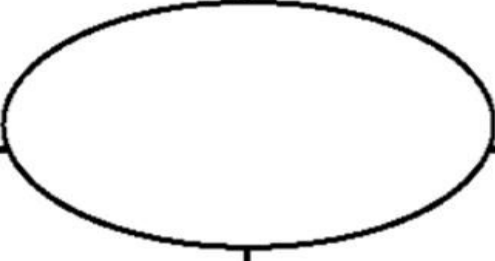
## Discussion Prep Worksheet

**STEP 1** – BRAINSTORM IDEAS ABOUT DESIRE AND LOVE ON THE MAPS BELOW.

Definition	Facts/Characteristics
Examples	Non-examples



Definition	Facts/Characteristics
Examples	Non-examples



**STEP 2 - Choose 3 texts that helps you support your opinion about the relationship between DESIRE and LOVE?**

**1. Description of text:**

**How does this text support your opinion—be specific.** Use quotations to support your position. (If your text is a graphic image, describe how it supports your opinion.)

**2. Description of text:**

**How does this text support your opinion—be specific.** Use quotations to support your position. (If your text is a graphic image, describe how it supports your opinion.)

**3. Description of text:**

**How does this text support your opinion—be specific.** Use quotations to support your position. (If your text is a graphic image, describe how it supports your opinion.)

## TEXT A

# *Scientific American*

## *The Neuroscience of Distance and Desire*

### Warning: What you want is not as close as it appears

By Piercarlo Valdesolo | Tuesday, June 15, 2010

Take a look at the cup of coffee in front of you. Think of how badly you want it. Think of the warmth it will bring as it slips past your pursed lips and reaches through your body's core. The inviting astringency that lingers on your tastebuds, and that can only be abated by another sip. Once you have worked yourself into a caffeine-deprived frenzy, reach out your hand and try and grasp your liquid gold. New research conducted by Emily Balcetis and David Dunning and published in a recent issue of the journal *Psychological Science* suggests that you might not reach far enough. The coffee cup appears closer than it really is.

This may sound absurd to those of us who believe we see the natural world as it is. How far away am I from my coffee mug? Why, as far away as it looks! The authors' argument, however, rests on the idea that the way we see the world can be distorted by the way we feel and think about it. Their research is part of an emerging body of work supporting this idea. For example, researchers have found that hills appear steeper and distances longer when people are fatigued or carrying heavy loads. The difficulty of the task distorts our perception of distance. This will ring true for any post-holiday jogger who might at first be astonished at how long a mile appears with the weight of turkey, stuffing and cheesecake dangling from his sides. But as the pounds drip away, the mile marker doesn't look quite so distant. Anyone who has been tasked with exceedingly tedious administrative work probably has an intimate understanding of this well. As I grade student exams, the more tedious the work, the less of an impact I seem to be making in that tall stack of papers in front of me. Haven't I been doing this for two hours already?

Balcetis and Dunning wondered whether the desirability of an object might also influence perception, causing us to distort our proximity to objects we crave. In other words, do objects that we want or like appear closer to us than they actually are? In a series of clever experiments Balcetis and Dunning varied the desirability of target objects and asked for participants' estimates of their physical proximity to these objects. For example, participants who had just eaten pretzels perceived a water bottle as significantly closer to them relative to participants who had just drunk as much water as they wanted. In other words, those who desired the water more, perceived it as more easily attainable. A \$100 bill that participants had the possibility of winning appeared closer to participants than a \$100 bill that belonged to the experimenter. The results of surveys that provided participants with positive social feedback (you have an "above average" sense of humor) were perceived as closer than surveys that provided negative feedback (you have a "below average" sense of humor).

These perceptual distortions manifested in physical actions towards desirable or undesirable objects as well. Participants who were asked to toss a beanbag towards a desirable object (a \$25 gift card) came up significantly shorter than participants who tossed the bag towards a neutral object (a gift card worth \$0), perceiving it to be closer than it actually was.

Finally, participants were asked to stand opposite a wall upon which experimenters had placed two strips of tape exactly 90 inches away from each other. Beneath one of the pieces of tape was either a bag of chocolates or a bag of what experimenters described as a “freshly collected sample of dog feces” - two things most of us can, hopefully, agree are desirable and undesirable. Participants were asked to move towards the object until their distance equaled the distance between the pieces of tape. Participants, overestimating their proximity to the desirable object, moved significantly closer to the feces than the chocolate. Street-walkers everywhere beware: dog poop is closer than it may appear.

Though these findings may conjure up images of moving in for kisses that land short or attempted caresses that only glance the tip of your target’s nose, the authors argue that these types of distortions are an important part of social life. They help motivate us to pursue those goals that are particularly desirable, and encourage us to not pursue those goals that might be particularly difficult to attain. The logic here is simply that energy is a limited resource, and over evolutionary time the individuals who have been most successful have been those who directed their energy towards goals that would either benefit them the most or that would not come at too high a risk.

The closer an object appears, the more obtainable it seems. The more obtainable it seems, the more likely we are to go for it. Likewise, the more challenging a goal appears (a mile run when you’re out of shape) the more distant it will seem. The more distant it seems, the less likely you are to lace up your sneakers and the more likely you are to hit up those sweat pants and leftovers. This may seem counter-intuitive – after all, running is good for our health, so how could a perceptual bias that makes us less likely to do it be helpful? While it may be disconcerting to know that your eyes conspire against your waistline, the “impossible is nothing” mentality of our exercise culture, though it will certainly help you look great in a swimsuit, was probably not a terrific strategy over evolutionary time. That chasm over there? Impossible to jump across. How about that growling bear? It’s impossible to physically subdue. There would have been goals that were impossible or, at least, very difficult or unlikely for an individual to achieve, and having the perceptual system guide us in the right direction (e.g. by making the chasm look wider than it actually is, and the bear perhaps a bit larger and meaner) would have been extremely important.

In sum, the things that we want will be perceived as relatively closer and more obtainable and energize action geared towards their acquisition. This perhaps explains why that cute bartender you’ve been eyeing recently appears to lean in tantalizingly close when pouring your drink. But beware of how your eyes may deceive you. Though you may desire the barkeep’s affections, those dexterous hands may be farther away than you think. What appears to be within reach might, in fact, not be so. Indeed, these findings suggest that Morrissey’s musings on the effects of unrequited love need revision. While he may be right that the “the more you ignore me, the closer I get”, it may be equally true that the more you ignore me, the closer you get.

**TEXT B**

*Desire,*

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Where true Love burns Desire is Love's pure flame;  
It is the reflex of our earthly frame,  
That takes its meaning from the nobler part,  
And but translates the language of the heart.

From Emily Dickinson (1830–86).  
Complete Poems. 1924.

**Part Three: Love**

**II**

YOU left me, sweet, two legacies,—  
A legacy of love  
A Heavenly Father would content,  
Had He the offer of;

You left me boundaries of pain  
Capacious as the sea,  
Between eternity and time,  
Your consciousness and me.

## TEXT C

Pointer Sister's singing "Fire" by Bruce Springsteen:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCOBp1Lrlf4>

### "Fire"

lyrics and music by Bruce Springsteen

I'm driving in my car

I turn on the radio

I'm pulling you close

You just say no

You say you don't like it

But girl I know you're a liar

'Cause when we kiss

Ooooh, Fire

Late at night

I'm takin' you home

I say I wanna stay

You say you wanna be alone

You say you don't love me

Romeo and Juliet

Samson and Delilah

Baby you can bet

Their love they didn't deny

Your words say split

But your words they lie

Girl you can't hide your desire'

Cause when we kiss

Oh, Fire

Fire

You had a hold on me

Right from the start

A grip so tight

I couldn't tear it apart

My nerves all jumpin'

Actin' like a fool

Well, your kisses they burn

But your heart stays cool

'Cause when we kiss

Mmmmm, Fire

Fire

Burnin in my soul

It's outta control

## **TEXT D**

### **High School: A Love Story**

*This work has been published in the Teen Ink monthly print magazine.*

By Mike.D, Ada, MI

It seems like when it comes to one's high school experience, the less-fortunate majority of us have a list of regrets. There are things we wish had gone differently, things that should or shouldn't have happened, and things that we don't even want to think about. I had my share of disappointments, mainly regarding the opposite sex. I didn't understand girls and they certainly didn't understand me. True, I was socially awkward, but I was a nice, caring person. Why was I so different from the inconsiderate jerks the girls swooned over? I made it my mission to try to understand girls, knowing full well that most men go through their entire lives without a clue. Nevertheless, I had to try.

It was my junior year and homecoming was just around the corner. Up until then, I hadn't attended school dances. I practiced my speech and built up courage weeks in advance of the day I would ask a girl to homecoming. My heart was beating out of my chest and my hands wouldn't stop shaking. With a trembling voice, I asked the question I had rehearsed in the mirror over and over the night before. There was a brief pause ... I held my breath.

“I wasn't really planning on going to homecoming. Sorry.”

For the first time I had reached inside myself for the courage to ask someone; I wouldn't give up now. Instead of falling into despair, I decided to ask someone else – someone I hoped might give me a chance. After a day or two, I gathered my nerves and repeated the process with an air of optimism. But I was promptly rejected ... twice more.

What was I doing wrong? Was the problem with me or them? I went to the dance anyway with a group of friends. Two of the girls I had asked were there without a date. I avoided them. I had struck out this time, but I wasn't calling it quits. I decided I needed to focus on being more social and learning to talk to girls.

Later that year I was preparing to ask another girl to prom. I had a crush on her and had become comfortable talking with her – a milestone I was proud of. In a similar ritual to homecoming, I spent days building up confidence and practicing in front of my mirror. Head held high with attempted courage, I approached her locker nervously.

“So, uh ... I was sort of wondering, would you like to go to prom with me?”

An eternity passed before her response. My heart stopped. I think I forgot to breathe.

“Um, okay. Sure.”

At last I had succeeded! She said yes! Wait. She didn't say yes per se. What did she mean by “Okay, sure”? Did she really want to go with me? Did it matter? She said yes, after all. I spent the next few days in the clouds; for the first time a girl was giving me a chance. But the way she accepted made me a bit uneasy, as if I had to walk through a completely dark room. Perhaps nothing was lurking in the shadows



and the fear was all in my head. But on the other hand, maybe a pitiless monster waited there to strike me down when I was most vulnerable.

Unfortunately, it turned out to be the latter. I arrived home one night to a message telling me she had called. I dialed her number, hoping for the best but fearing the worst. I braced myself. In the nicest way possible, she told me she couldn't go to prom with me and apologized for disappointing me.

I'm not ashamed to admit I shed a few tears. I didn't bounce back quite as I had after homecoming. How could she raise my hopes and then drop me like a stone? I hadn't actually changed at all; I was still scared to talk to girls and understood nothing about how they thought. Was it too much to ask for someone to give me chance?

Fast forward to the summer before I started college. I had just gotten ice cream and was outside the movie theater in the cold, dark night. Next to me stood a girl whose cute smile made me forget the chilly evening. Her name was Cait, and we were nearing the end of our first date. After a concert, we decided to take a walk to pass the time until her curfew. We held hands – something I hadn't done since fine arts camp. A tingling feeling ran from my fingers all the way up to the back of my head. The experience felt very surreal; it almost didn't register that I had a girlfriend who liked me. We had talked all during the concert, just like we had during the youth group trip when we had gotten to know each other. My mind was calm. For the first time in my life, I felt like someone actually wanted to spend time with me.

Did I ever figure out how girls think? No. I learned something much better instead. Through all of these trials of high school love, I'd come to believe that men and women are more alike than either is willing to admit. I've decided that although I've faced rejection, I won't let it bother me. (I was turned down by four girls for senior prom, but that's another story.)

I am much more confident now, and I've learned to appreciate the strengths that others see in me: kindness, honesty, and my skill as a good listener. I learned not to give up or give in to despair, and to always be myself. I could stand to gain some more confidence, but I'm working on it. All things considered, there isn't much about my life I would change, even those parts about high school that I try not to remember. I wouldn't be who I am today without those experiences.

It is the summer before my freshman year of college and Cait and I have been going out for two weeks. I'm driving her home after a day of fun. Using her cute voice, typically reserved for “Good night” or “I miss you,” Cait says, “Mike, I thought you were going to try to be less shy today.”

“What more could I have done?” I ask.

“Well ...” she says, her cheeks slowly turning red, “you could have kissed me.”

We pull into the driveway and I walk her to the porch, my breath slow but silent. I try to hide my pounding heart and nervous sweating. Cait is still blushing, afraid she ruined the moment by speaking too soon. I fold my arms around her in a good-bye hug that seems endless.

“Cait.”

She locks eyes with me and smiles. Her lids slowly fall like a curtain after the final encore. My pulse quickens as I tilt my head to the side. There, under the pale yellow lamplight, our lips touch and I experience my first kiss.

TEXT E



THIS IS JEN, MY LONGTIME UNREQUITTED LOVE WHO SOMEHOW KNOWS TO CALL ME JUST AS I STOP THINKING ABOUT HER. JEN, THIS IS LISA.