Upon first examination, the title of Dorothy Parker’s poem “Men” seems quite simple. After all, a three-letter word would not appear to contain much meaning. However, in light of Parker’s cynicism toward the male gender in general, the title suggests that all men can be described by the following lines, that all men are the same. Additionally, the shortness of the title may suggest Parker’s frustration with men; that one short word summoning the image of an exasperated rolling of the eyes or shrugging of the shoulders.

Parker begins with a very positive depiction of men, describing men’s worship of women. She says men praise women as “their morning star,” suggesting at the beginning of a relationship the woman will be held in high respect just for being who she is. However, in the very next couplet, Parker states that the man will begin to try to change the woman as soon as she returns affection. This is a very slight shift at first, but the alteration becomes more drastic as the poem continues.

In the middle of the poem, the man seeks to completely change the woman after he feels that he has control of her. Parker uses the soothing description “safe and sound,” which may suggest that the man views the woman as a small child who needs protection. Also, she says that the man will “put a curse on” the woman’s “moods and ways.” The woman will no longer be in control of her own life; rather, the male has cast her under some sort of spell, transforming her into someone else. The woman’s independence has been taken from her. Parker writes, “They cannot let you go your gait.” The woman’s gait or walk represents that path that she would choose for her life, but the man takes those choices from the woman. He “influence[s]” and “educate[s]” the woman so that she will act in a way that is satisfactory to the man.

In the final line of the poem, Parker reveals her exasperation with men: “They make me sick, they make me tired.” The slow transition from the admiring opening line to the critical final line mirrors the subtle but inevitable transition in the woman who gives herself over to a man. The poem’s regular meter and rhyme scheme trips along merrily, seducing the reader to the conclusion almost without realizing that a change is taking place. Similarly, Parker’s poem is warning her female readers of what will happen to them if they allow themselves to be seduced by the deceitful charm of “Men.”