

JOHN DONNE  
PP. 244-253

1. What was Donne's first aim in life?
2. What impeded his ability to attain that goal (#1)?
3. In his young life, why was Donne financially secure?
4. What did Donne do in 1601 that hurt Donne's position and ambition?
5. Write out Donne's shortest poem in its entirety:
6. Where did Donne write the above poem (#5)?
7. How many children did the Donnes have?
8. What happened to 5 of the Donnes children?
9. What was a common topic of Donne's poetry and writing?
10. What did King James I persuade Donne to do in 1615?
11. What position in the Church of England did Donne attain?

"Song"

12. What is *hyperbole*?
13. What seven tasks does the speaker instruct the listener to do in the first stanza of "Song"?
14. What do the seven tasks in #13 have in common?
15. What example of *hyperbole* do you see in stanza 2?
16. What is the main idea of stanza 2?
17. Even if the listener were to find a virtuous woman, why does the speaker say he would not seek her out? How is this an example of *hyperbole*?
18. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
19. How would you describe the speaker's tone?
20. What incident may have motivated the poem?

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"

21. What is a valediction?
22. What is a metaphysical conceit?
23. Under what circumstances did Donne write the poem?
24. Why did Ann Donne not want John Donne to leave?
25. What happened 2 days after Donne arrived in Paris?
26. The first stanza begins with a simile. What is the connection the speaker makes between "virtuous men passing mildly away" and the way the speaker wants to say goodbye to his love?
27. Why would virtuous men "pass mildly away"? How do you suppose evil men pass away?
28. The speaker wants the parting couple to "melt" and "make no noise." What does he want their parting to be like?
29. What's a "tear-flood" or a "sigh-tempest"? Why does the poet say in the accompanying stanza he doesn't want these things?
30. What is the "laity"? Who are the "laity" probably in this poem?
31. What is the "moving of th'earth" that brings harms and fears?

32. What is that "far greater" trepidation of the spheres? (i.e., Although earthquakes are scary, how is the earth constantly moving although people don't normally sense it?) Why is the latter movement "innocent" in comparison to that earlier movement that causes harms and fears?
33. What does the word *sublunary* mean in the fourth stanza? What is the contrast Donne makes between "sublunary lover's love" and the "refined" or heavenly love between the speaker and his love?
34. Why is it that sublunary lovers have a "dull" love in contrast with the heavenly love? Why can't sublunary lovers stand absence or being away from each other? Why is it that those with "refined" love don't care if they are separated physically from each other?
35. What quality about the couple's love prevents them from understanding what it is?
36. Donne makes up a neologism or new word: he refers to being "*inter-assurèd*" of the mind. What do you suppose this word means? How is being *inter-assurèd* different than being *self-assured* or *assured*?
37. What is the paradox Donne makes in stanza six?
38. According to the speaker, the couple will "endure not yet / A breach, but an expansion, / Like gold to airy thinness beat." What does this mean? How is the way a goldsmith hammers gold flat into paper thin foil like the way their soul will behave as the two become physically farther and farther apart?
39. In stanza seven, the speaker abandons the metaphysical conceit of goldworking and turns to a different line of thought in which he compares a geometer's compass to the nature of their souls. Explain the metaphysical conceit of the compass and how each leg or foot corresponds to one lover in the relationship.
40. Which leg or foot of the compass is the male speaker? Which leg or foot of the compass is his female audience? Why is this appropriate for their situation? According to Donne, the further out he (or the mobile compass point) moves, the more it will do what?
41. What will the speaker (and his corresponding leg of the compass) do as he gradually approaches homeward? (i.e., how will his stance and bearing change the closer he comes to returning to his love?)
42. What is it that "makes [his] circle just" or perfect? (i.e., what force or thing ensures that the speaker will end his journey where he began--in his wife's arms?)

“Meditation 17”

43. What valediction must we all make?
44. What prompted Donne to write a series of meditations in 1624?
45. What is the bell referred to in the opening lines? What does it signal?
46. Donne points out that a very sick individual may be too sick to realize that the bell is tolling for him. He concludes that "perchance I may think myself so much better than I am. . . they who are about me may have caused it to me toll for me, and I know not." What does he mean by this?
47. Why does Donne say he should be concerned about each child's baptism and each parishioner's funeral in the church? Why does it affect him even if he doesn't know the child or the deceased parishioner?

48. What are some of the "translators" Donne says God employs as the author of humanity? What does he mean by this?
49. What does Donne mean when he says, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main"?
50. Why does Donne say Europe should be concerned if a single clod of land is washed away into the sea? How does that correspond to the way humanity should be concerned if a single person dies?
51. Why does Donne think that "Any man's death diminishes me"?
52. Why should a person never "send to know" (i.e. ask) for whom a funeral bell is tolling? What is the inevitable answer?
53. Explain the conceit about affliction or suffering being like buried gold. How does Donne suggest we can benefit from the suffering of others?

“Death Be Not Proud”

54. What is an *apostrophe*? (If you can't remember, you may have to look in the Handbook of Literary Terms, beginning on p. 1189 in the back of your textbook.)
55. Who is the speaker of the poem addressing?
56. Why does the speaker say Death might feel proud in lines 1-2?
57. How does the speaker refute the characterization (#56)?
58. What *paradox* is in lines 3-4?
59. To what does Donne compare Death in lines 5-6?
60. What positive does Donne point out about Death in line 8?
61. To what does Donne compare Death in line 9? How is this true?
62. What does “swell'st” mean in line 12?
63. The last line states that Death will die. How is this paradox true?
64. What type of poem is this?