Investigate!
Metaphysical poetry: John Donne,
A Hymn to God, my God, in my Sicknesse

Going deeper:
- Read the funeral service in The Book of Common Prayer
  - Can you recognise some of the references from the poem?
- Or read 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10
  - How does this help to clarify some of Donne’s thoughts?

Themes:
- To what extent does this way of looking at illness and death make sense to you?
- How do these ideas and images help Donne to face the prospect of death?

Language and tone:
- Compare and contrast Hymn to God, my God and the sonnet What if this present . . . ?
- What particularly do you notice in the differences of tone?

Structure and versification:
- Read through Hymn to God, my God
  - What do you think are the strengths of the poem?
  - Are there any images that stand out for you?
  - What do you think is Donne’s secret for a calm approach to death in this poem? After all, he seems troubled enough in some of his other religious poetry.

Imagery and symbolism:
Look at the imagery of Hymn to God, my God and the explanatory notes
- In what other sense is Donne a ‘flat’ map?
- Explain the line ‘though their currents yeeld return to none’ (l.12)
- Explain the significance of ‘sweat’ and ‘blood’ in ll.24-25.

© 2008 crossref-it.info