

# Investigate! Metaphysical poetry:

## Henry Vaughan, *Ascension-Hymn*

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#### ❖ **Setting the scene:**

Read through *Ascension - Hymn*

- What can you tell the poem itself about Vaughan's personal circumstances at the time of writing?
- To whom is the poem addressed?

#### ❖ **Going deeper:**

- How else might life after death be visualised?
- To what extent is Vaughan's desire for heaven just because of the loss of loved ones?
- Or is it some more deep-seated longing? Look at his *The Retreat*.
- List the words in *Ascension – Hymn* that are to do with light and shade.
- List words that are to do with enclosure and entrapment, and freedom.

#### ❖ **Themes:**

Consider the themes of *Ascension - Hymn*

- What is the force of 'that hill' (l.39)?
- Why will Vaughan 'need no glass' there? (Look at 1 Corinthians 13:12)

#### ❖ **Imagery and symbolism:**

- Consider the imagery Vaughan uses in *Ascension – Hymn*
  - What is the force of the simile in stanza 7?
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#### ❖ **Language and tone:**

Consider the language and tone of *Ascension - Hymn*

- Do you think this could be sung?
- To what extent does the mode of expression of stanza 6 resemble the poetry of George Herbert rather than the rest of this poem?
- How would you describe the poem's tone?

#### ❖ **Structure and versification:**

- In what sense is *Ascension – Hymn* a metaphysical poem? How might the reader view death after reading it?