

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

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### 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?

#### ❖ **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.

#### ❖ **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.