

Investigate! Metaphysical poetry: George Herbert, *Redemption*

❖ **Setting the scene:**

- In *Redemption* it is the tenant goes searching for the landlord, not vice versa
 - How does that affect the feel of the poem?
- Would you ever naturally use the word 'redeem' or 'redemption'? in what contexts?

❖ **Going deeper:**

Comment on *Redemption* as a story

- If poetry is the art of the unsaid, how would this rate?
- What is the implication of 'Who straight . . . said'?

❖ **Themes:**

- Does God seem distant in *Redemption*?
 - Look at the language of place Herbert uses.
- Do we get the sense that it is God, or Jesus specifically, whom Herbert is making his landlord?
- In what sense is Christ always being crucified for those seeking him?

❖ **Imagery and symbolism:**

In *Redemption* Herbert wants to jerk people back to a sense of the strangeness of the story

- How well do you think he has succeeded?
- Does the story seem seriously strange to you?

Consider the theological symbolism in *Redemption*.

- Why could the tenant not have been granted his lease sooner?
- What is the significance of the land the landlord had done to repossess?
- Does the poem suggest something about the manner of Christ's coming to earth?

❖ **Language and tone:**

Looking at *Redemption* as a whole

- Can you set out the layers of meaning in the poem?
- Does the simplicity of the language reveal or hide the meanings?
- What would Herbert's first audience have gained from the poem as told?

❖ **Structure and versification:**

- Where do you think the effect of *Redemption* lies?
- What would be the major differences between this sonnet and one of Donne's Holy Sonnets?