

# Investigate! Metaphysical poetry: Richard Crashaw, *St Mary Magdalene, or the Weeper*

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### Metaphysical poetry: Richard Crashaw, *St Mary Magdalene, or the Weeper*

#### ❖ **Setting the scene:**

Crashaw's style is often called 'Rococo', an architectural term

- Look up the term
- How it might be applied to poetry?

#### ❖ **Going deeper:**

- Take two or three of the sections of *St Mary Magdalene* outlined above
  - Make a detailed analysis of them
    - Look at the imagery
    - How does Crashaw make the transition into and out of each image?
- From the poem, what do you think really interested Crashaw in the story of the weeping woman?

#### ❖ **Themes:**

- Can you see any other themes in *St Mary Magdalene*?
- Can you see how the poem could be a translation into images of Crashaw's own inner intensities?

#### ❖ **Imagery and symbolism:**

Work out the images in the last four stanzas of *St Mary Magdalene*

- Do they work for you?
- What other conceits have struck you as original and striking?

- Compare the imagery here to Donne's *A Valediction: of Weeping* or *A Nocturnall upon St. Lucies Day*.

#### ❖ **Language and tone:**

- Consider the language of *St Mary Magdalene*
  - Explain 'Balsom may be for their own greife' (stanza 10)
  - List words that have to do with lushness and profusion
  - List words that convey the idea of wealth
- What is ultimately the value of the weeper's tears?
  - . . . and their worth?

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

- What strike you as the main features of *St Mary Magdalene*?
- Do you feel it is a strange poem?
  - Can you say wherein the strangeness lies?
- Is it really a religious poem?
  - Or is it just a poem about weeping?