

Investigate! Metaphysical poetry:

John Donne, *A Valediction: of Weeping*

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❖ **Setting the scene:**

When was the last time you had to say goodbye to someone, with a heavy heart?

- How did you console each other?
- In these days of instant communication, is leave-taking and separation less painful an experience than, perhaps, it used to be?

❖ **Going deeper:**

- What is the effect of the simple versification in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*?
 - Does the poem have the same compactness about it that Donne's other poems do?
- What to you are the strengths of this poem?
 - How well does it describe the universal phenomenon of lovers having to part from one another?

❖ **Themes:**

- One of the other themes that could be considered is the agony and ecstasy of love
 - How would *A Valediction: of Weeping* fit into that?
- If you were Donne's lover, how much would you be consoled by the poem?

❖ **Imagery and symbolism:**

- Analyse the expression 'my heaven dissolved' (l.18)
 - Does 'heaven' here just mean 'sky', for example?
 - What else is implied in the term, and in the idea of dissolution?

❖ **Language and tone:**

- Consider how best to read the poem out loud
 - How would you deal with the shorter lines, for example?
 - How would you vary the tone for each stanza?

❖ **Structure and versification:**

- Look at the length of the first and last lines of each stanza.
 - How would you comment on these?
- Pick out one or two images or expressions that have struck you most.
 - Why have they done so?