

Investigate! Metaphysical poetry:

John Donne, *Death be not Proud*

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❖ **Going deeper:**

- Read the whole passage from 1 Corinthians 15
 - What do you notice about the difference in tone and argument?
- In what way is mocking our enemies an effective way of dealing with them?

❖ **Themes:**

- When you think about death and dying, what sort of emotions do you experience?
 - How is it possible to deal with the negative ones?
- Do you think Donne is really that confident, or is this a piece of bravado, hiding a very real fear?
 - What evidence can you find?

❖ **Imagery and symbolism:**

- Explain 'And dost with poison, war and sickness dwell'
- What is the difference between 'Fate' and 'Chance', or is Donne merely using two words for the same idea?

❖ **Language and tone:**

- At the time that Donne was writing, silent reading was almost unheard of

- In what tone would you read aloud *Death be not Proud*?
 - Try several
- How would you make the reading as dramatic as possible?
 - What clues does Donne give that he wants a dramatic reading?

❖ **Structure and versification:**

- Consider the rhyme scheme of *Death be not Proud*
 - Can you see any internal rhymes?
 - What other stylistic features have you noticed?
- Trace the contrasts in rhythm that Donne introduces
- If you were setting this to music
 - where would you emphasise the beat?
 - where might you employ some syncopation?
 - where might you vary the tempo?
- What seem to you the most memorable features of the poem?