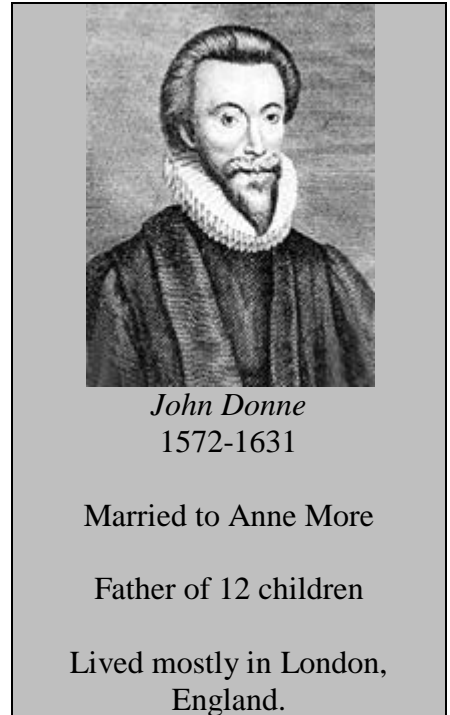


Biography

John Donne was born in 1572 in London, England, and was known as the founder of the *Metaphysical Poets*, a group of poets known for their ability to startle the reader and coax new perspective through paradoxical images, subtle argument, inventive syntax, and imagery from art, philosophy, and religion. Donne studied at both Oxford and Cambridge, but did not graduate from either one because he could not subscribe to Anglicanism. After studying law for two years, he was finally pressured into joining the Anglican Church in 1594. He wrote his first two collections of poetry during the 1590's, *Satires*, and *Songs and Sonnets*.



In 1601, Donne secretly married sixteen-year old Anne More, and was imprisoned for a short time because of it. In 1610, after publishing *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne was pressured to join the Anglican Ministry by then King James I. Donne was appointed Royal Chaplain in 1615, and as a result, was required to travel at length to give sermons to surrounding areas. Because he was gone so often from home, Donne wrote *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* for his wife to assure her that their love would span the great distances they were apart. Anne More died only two years later in 1617 while giving birth to their 12th child. The *Holy Sonnets* are attributed to this part in his life.

Donne spent his remaining years as dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, and his writing reflected his fear of his inevitable death. Donne died in 1631 in London.

Selected Poem:

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

This poem is representative of *Metaphysical Poetry*, and is Donne's blend of spirituality, love, and extended metaphor. The poem consists of nine stanzas of four lines each (or quatrains) with a rhyme scheme of alternating abab cdcd efef and so on. The seventh stanza features an extended metaphor wherein Donne compares the two souls of himself and his wife to a compass, where she is the "fixed foot" and he the wandering foot that must separate itself from the center. Donne states that, even though the two are apart, they are still connected like the two points of a compass. I selected this poem because of its blend of spirituality, love, and because of the

extended metaphor comparing husband and wife to a compass that bends as the fixed positions move, but who are still constantly connected.

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