

John Donne-Study Guide

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"

1. In plain English, what does the title "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" mean?
2. What is the scene described in the first stanza?
3. In Lines 7–8, what does "'Twere profanation of our joys / To tell the laity our love," mean ?
4. What phrase does the speaker use to describe the *opposite* of his and his wife's love?
5. In a simile in line 24, the lovers' souls are said to resemble gold in what way?
6. According to the speaker, when is absence from a lover is easiest to bear?
7. What is the device used for that the speaker compares his and his wife's love to?
8. In line 27, "Thy soul, the fixed foot" means what?
9. What fact about Donne's life fits *best* with the message of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"?
10. A **metaphysical conceit** is a type of what?
11. The term **metaphysical conceit** does *not* imply what?

"Death be not proud"

12. According to the speaker, how will Death die?
13. What does the image, "One short sleep," in line 13 stand for?
14. Which aspect of Death in the poem is *not* a personification? Or, what IS personification in the poem?
15. What tone does the speaker take toward the subject of death?
16. Line 7, "And soonest our best men with thee do go," could be paraphrased how?
17. What is a **paradox**?
18. Be able to identify a paradox.
19. In "Death be not proud" a paradox can be found in what saying?

20. What is the explanation for the central paradox in “Death be not proud” ?

“Meditation 17.”

21. The saying “never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee” means what?

22. “If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were” means what?

23. The saying “No man is an island” means what?

24. In a metaphor, Donne says that humanity is a book and God is its author. In that metaphor, death is the book being
what?

25. In the metaphor of the book, what is the Library?

26. According to Donne, why should we be glad to hear church bells toll for us?

27. What does “no man hath affliction enough that is not matured, and ripened by it” mean?

28. When church bells ring, they ring over and over again in the same way for a long time. This practice is one reason
why Donne used what rhetorical device?

29. What is a synonym for tone in literature?

30. What is the relationship between tone and subject?

31. The tone of “Meditation 17” could *not* be called what?

“Song.”

32. The speaker in “Song” seems to think that finding a sincere woman is what?

33. The statement that one could “get with child a mandrake root” before satisfying the search for a true woman is an
example of what?

34. In the second stanza, how long does the speaker ask the listener to ride in search of a true woman?

35. How far does the speaker say he would travel to meet an honest woman?

36. Why is the speaker wary of meeting an honest woman?
37. Which fact about Donne's life seems to fit *best* with the fact that he wrote "Song"?
38. The tone of "Song" could be described as what?
39. **Metaphysical poetry** is a label for a style of what type of poetry?
40. **Metaphysical poetry** usually includes what? (Name three things)

