

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

By John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,

And whisper to their souls to go,

Whilst some of their sad friends do say

The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,

No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;

'Twere profanation of our joys

To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,

Men reckon what it did, and meant;

But trepidation of the spheres,

Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love

(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit

Absence, because it doth remove

Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,

That our selves know not what it is,

Inter-assured of the mind,

Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
 Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
 As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
 To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
 Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
 And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
 Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
 And makes me end where I begun.

Name: _____ Date: _____

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1. In line 5, the speaker urges "us" to melt. What else does the speaker urge "us" to do?
 - A) The speaker urges "us" to create a tear-flood.
 - B) The speaker urges "us" to create a sigh-tempest.
 - C) The speaker urges "us" to make no noise.
 - D) The speaker urges "us" to speak with the laity.
2. The poet uses stanzas to organize the ideas of this poem. What is the structure of each stanza?
 - A) Each stanza is three lines long with a rhyming pattern of ABA.
 - B) Each stanza is four lines long with a rhyming pattern of ABAB.
 - C) Each stanza is five lines long with a rhyming pattern of AABBA.
 - D) Each stanza is six lines long with a rhyming pattern of AABBC.

3. Read these lines from the poem.

"Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss."

How does the love the speaker feels differ from "[d]ull sublunary lovers' love"?

- A) The love the speaker feels has more to do with the mind.
- B) The love the speaker feels has more to do with the eyes.
- C) The love the speaker feels has more to do with the lips.
- D) The love the speaker feels has more to do with the hands.

4. The speaker has to leave the person he or she is addressing.

What is a phrase or line that supports this conclusion?

- A) "The breath goes now" (line 4)
- B) "Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears" (line 9)
- C) "Though I must go" (line 22)
- D) "If they be two" (line 25)

5. What is the speaker's message to his or her addressee?

- A) The more time you spend with me, the more I love you.
- B) We should spend some time apart because I do not love you as much as I used to.
- C) Pay attention to the movement of the earth because that movement can cause harm.
- D) Do not be sad about me leaving, because our love will bring me back to you.

6. Read these lines from the poem.

"Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home."

What are compasses compared to in these lines?

- A) "souls" (line 25)
- B) "gold" (line 28)
- C) "airy thinness" (line 28)
- D) "home" (line 32)

7. Read these lines from the poem.

"If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home."

What does the word "it" in line 29 refer to?

- A) "the fixed foot" (line 27)
- B) "the center" (line 29)
- C) "the other" (line 30)
- D) "home" (line 32)

8. Read these lines from the poem.

"Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do."

Normally the "soul" of the addressee "makes no show to move." Under what circumstance does it move?

9. Read these lines from the poem.

"Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun."

What makes the speaker "end" where he or she began?

10. What can you infer about the personality of the addressee?

Support your answer with evidence from the text.
