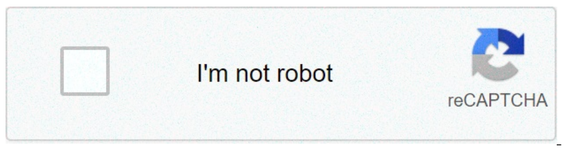

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Death be not proud explanation line by line

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so; For those whom thou think’st thou dost overthrow Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me. From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be, Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow, And soonest our best men with thee do go, Rest of their bones, and soul’s delivery. Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men, And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell, And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well And better than thy stroke; why swell’st thou then? One short sleep past, we wake eternally, And death shall be no more, death, thou shalt die. —John Donne John Donne (born January 22, 1572 – died March 31, 1631) shifted dramatically in his life: The early Donne was the passionate lover and rebel of sense; the later Donne, a man consumed with his own spiritual journey and search for truth. Donne is known as the first and greatest of metaphysical poets—those of a genre in which “the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions,” as essayist and critic Samuel Johnson put it. Here, Donne has taken a Romantic form and transformed a transcendental struggle of life and death into a quiet ending, one in which death “shall be no more.” Where Johnson spied cumbersome force, Donne’s style dazzles with soft and calm brilliance, even in the cascade of calumnies against the great “equalizer” Death. “Fate, chance, kings and desperate men” are yoked together, not in bondage but in freedom, in their power to inflict and manipulate death at will. The panorama of life and legacy has overcome death time and again, yet Donne expounds the expansive exploitation of death in one verse. It is the will of man that triumphs over the cessation of life, the will to believe in what cannot be seen, to dismiss “poor death” as mere “pictures” compared to the substance of life infused with the Spirit. Death, be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so; No bragging rights for Death, according to the poet, who in the first two lines of his sonnet denounces in apostrophe the end of life, “not proud,” “not so.” “Mighty and dreadful,” two weighty terms, do not belong nor confer any majesty on death. “Thou are not so.” A simple statement, a certain indictment, and the poet has dispensed with Death, who is ponderous, no preposterous for the previous fears His presence has impressed on mankind. For those whom thou think’st thou dost overthrow? Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me. In this neat conceit, Death himself is fooled, limited by the surface. “Thou think’st thou dost overthrow,” the monarch of destruction is an impoverished exile, removed forever more from the room of imperious prominence. “Poor death” is now the object of pity, the last enemy that will be thrown into the lake of fire. From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be, Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow, And soonest our best men with thee do go, Rest of their bones, and soul’s delivery. The poet compares death not to a savage desecration, nor a fatal, final battle, but instead an extension of any easy rest, one from which a man receives “much pleasure.” “Rest and sleep” as “pictures,” the poet condescendingly remarks, bring death into the secondary status of demeaning dimension. Men’s bones receive a welcome respite, and their soul the final delivery from this earth. Death has nothing to brag about, for death is put in comparison with rest, with sleep, with regenerative silence. Death does not catch the prey of frail men, but instead sets men free, and without fail. Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men, And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell, And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well? And better than thy stroke; why swell’st thou then? Here, death as deemed a slave, a unique trope, one, which the poet fashions with wit and wisdom. “Fate” is far greater the force than the end of life which menaces many men. “Chance” is a game, a mere trifle, a toy which men gamble with, whether ending their fortunes or their lives. “Kings” put evil rebels, madmen, and threats to the state, to death. No one escapes the justice, the rule, the righteousness of the king, who even in passing, his dynasty passes on: “The King is dead. Long live the King!” is proclaimed from death to life, where the children of yesteryear become the rulers of today and the progenitors of the future. Death, mere bystander, ushers in the transitions of power. As for the company of death, the poet outlines simply “poison,” natural or otherwise, which can slay a man in minutes or in hours. Poisons which have ended kings and queens, eradicated vermin and other pestilences, even drugs which prosper and prolong life began as poisons which in improper doses kill, and quickly. Whether the vain ragings of craven men or glory on the battlefields, “war” covers a range of reigns and rights, ponderings and possibilities. Death is not even a scavenger, but a frustrated element pushed to the limit, expected to do the bidding of the common folk and the ruling elite, the final weapon which man overcomes even in being overcome. In war, where men die for country, they live forever in the memory of their countrymen, mocking Death who has aided their eternity. “Sickness” is the necessary pause for men who cannot contain their passions, for the growing race of human beings who run the race with no thought to running out. Sickness is the crucial agent that brings a long and much-needed arrest to those who inflict harm on their bodies, who resist the bounds of natural appetite. Sickness also is the final sign, the moments when a man who departs knows well that his time is short, and so the stultifying stops of pains and coughs at least buy him time to say “good-bye.” “Poppy or charms can make us sleep as well.” “As well” communicates “in comparison” and “in addition,” gaily sporting with the super-abounding grace of nature’s wonders, which man has contrived to ease his pain and quicken his rest. “Poppy” is a joyful word, a colorful, childlike flower winding away with careless wonder in the wind. “Charms,” whether magical or romantic, are bewitching and bewailing, at least for the one who has fallen beneath their spell. Sometimes, the simple charm of a smiling face suffices more, traced with the soft face of a poppy gladly handed to a loved one. And so, Death is outdone once again! One short sleep past, we wake eternally, And death shall be no more, death, thou shalt die. “Sleep” appears again, but not in conjunction with rest; instead, rest leads to life eternal, where man will no longer need to rest, fashioned as he will be in a body that does not age, that will never flag or fail, Donne decrees. Death is further impoverished, ruined, left desolate. Man in eternal life witnesses death succumbing to himself. “Death shall be no more,” the poet proudly yet dulcetly declares, not even bothering to speak to death. So certain, so final, so enriched with vigor, the poet then whispers, yet loudly of the import of the paradox: “Death, thou shalt die.” Death dies, or is Death dying? What a wicked end, the poet has mocked, derided, denounced, and diminished death into a cruel joke, a maxim which maximizes the power of the man reborn, trusting in a higher power to infuse him with eternal life, forever inoculating him from the subtleties of war, poison, and sickness all. Fate is fated to disappear, chance has become certainty, kings of limited renown are dethroned, and desperate men now hope. “Death, thou shalt die.” Death is now bereft of pride, like a witless cowboy who has shot himself in the foot, powerless and wounded, and by his own stroke. Donne indeed has done and dispensed with Death, and mortal man evermore may rejoice! Arthur Christopher Schaper is an author and teacher who lives in Torrance, CA. He writes several blogs including Schaper’s Corner. Originally published on The Epoch Times. NOTE: The Society considers this page, where your poetry resides, to be your residence as well, where you may invite family, friends, and others to visit. Feel free to treat this page as your home and remove anyone here who disrespects you. Simply send an email to mbryant@classicalpoets.org. Put “Remove Comment” in the subject line and list which comments you would like removed. The Society does not endorse any views expressed in individual poems or comments and reserves the right to remove any comments to maintain the decorum of this website and the integrity of the Society. Please see our Comments Policy here. For the memoir by John Gunther, see Death Be Not Proud (book). Sonnet X. "Death be not proud"by John DonnePortrait of John DonneWrittenbetween February and August 1609First published inSongs and Sonnets (1633)CountryKingdom of EnglandSeriesHoly SonnetsSubject(s)Christianity, Mortality, Resurrection, Eternal LifeGenre(s)religious poetry, devotional poetryFormSonnetRhyme schemeabba abba cddceeLines14 Sonnet X, also known by its opening words as "Death Be Not Proud", is a fourteen-line poem, or sonnet, by English poet John Donne (1572–1631), one of the leading figures in the metaphysical poets group of seventeenth-century English literature. Written between February and August 1609, it was first published posthumously in 1633. It is included as one of the nineteen sonnets that comprise Donne's Holy Sonnets or Divine Meditations, among his best-known works. Most editions number the poem as the tenth in the sonnet sequence, which follows the order of poems in the Westmoreland Manuscript (circa 1620), the most complete arrangement of the cycle, discovered in the late nineteenth century. However, two editions published shortly after Donne's death include the sonnets in a different order, where this poem appears as eleventh in the Songs and Sonnets (published 1633) and sixth in Divine Meditations (published 1635). "Death Be Not Proud" presents an argument against the power of death. Addressing Death as a person, the speaker warns Death against pride in his power. Such power is merely an illusion, and the end Death thinks it brings to men and women is in fact a rest from world-weariness for its alleged “victims.” The poet criticizes Death as a slave to other forces: fate, chance, kings, and desperate men. Death is not in control, for a variety of other powers exercise their volition in taking lives. Even in the rest it brings, Death is inferior to drugs. Finally, the speaker predicts the end of Death itself, stating “Death, thou shalt die.” [1] Poem "Holy Sonnets X" Death be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not soe, For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow, Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill me. From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee, Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow, And soonest our best men with thee doe goe, Rest of their bones, and souls deliverie. Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men, And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell, And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well, And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then? One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally, And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.[2] Donne suffered a major illness that brought him close to death during his eighth year as an Anglican minister. The illness may have been typhoid fever, but in recent years it has been shown that he may have had a relapsing fever in combination with other illnesses. The sonnet has an ABBA ABBA CDDC AA rhyme scheme ("eternalLY" is meant to rhyme with "DIE"). The last line alludes to 1 Corinthians 15:26: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death". The poem's opening words are echoed in a contemporary poem, "Death be not proud, thy hand gave not this blow", sometimes attributed to Donne, but more likely by his patron Lucy Harington Russell, Countess of Bedford. Notable use in pop culture "Death Be Not Proud" (1949) by John Gunther, is a memoir of his son's struggle with — and ultimately death from — a brain tumor. "Death Be Not Proud" was partially recited by Jason Miller as Patient X in the film The Exorcist III. The first two and last two lines of "Death Be Not Proud" are recited by Paladin in The Prophet (Episode 16, Season 3 of Have Gun - Will Travel). The poem was set for voice and piano by Benjamin Britten as the concluding song in his song cycle The Holy Sonnets of John Donne. Emma Thompson's character, Vivian Bearing, recites the poem in Wit, where John Donne plays a central role. The first two lines are recited at the beginning of the title track to Children of Bodom's third album Follow the Reaper. The poem is recited in its entirety by Kenneth Branagh at the end of Episode 4 of the 1987 BBC series Fortunes of War, following the death of one of the main characters. The title of the 1981 hostage drama film Kings and Desperate Men starring Patrick McGoohan, Alexis Kanner and Margaret Trudeau is taken from the poem and McGoohan recites part of it in the film. In The Simpsons episode "HOMR," Homer mentions reading the poem. Plot keystone, and last lines, in the 1984 film The Hit. In Inside No. 9, Series 5, episode "Death Be Not Proud", the last two lines are recited. References ^ "Analysis of John Donne's Death Be Not Proud". Slideshare.net. Retrieved 6 November 2017. ^ Donne, John (1912). Grierson, Herbert J. C. (ed.). The Poems of John Donne. 1. London: Oxford University Press. p. 326. Sources Schaper, Arthur. "Poetry Analysis: ‘Death Be Not Proud’ By John Donne". Classical Poets, 2013, . Accessed 24 February 2020. Further reading John Donne, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, ed. by Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), xii–xiv. Charles M. Coffin's ed. Donne’s poetry, The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne (New York: The Modern Library, 1952 External links Wikisource has original text related to this article: Death be not proud "Death Be Not Proud" in Representative Poetry Online Death Be Not Proud public domain audiobook at LibriVox Retrieved from "

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