

LESSON NOTE ON LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH WEEK 9

SUBJECT: Literature-in-English
TOPIC: Non-African Poetry: "The Good Morrow" by John Donne
CLASS: SS2
WEEK: 9

SUMMARY OF THE POEM

John Donne belonged to the group of poets now referred to as 'metaphysical poets.' These poets regarded poetry as an intellectual endeavor, rather than an emotional one. As a result, most of their works feature the use of highly intellectual language.

The poem begins with the speaker noting how his life and his lover's, did not truly begin until they met. Up until they came together they were like children suckling from their mother's breasts. He knows that any pleasure he has previously was fake. His current love is the only real thing he has ever experienced.

In the first stanza, the speaker begins with three questions; they all inquire into the state of his and his lover's lives before they were known to one another. Addressing his lover, what "by my troth" (or what in the world) they did before they loved. This question and those which follow are rhetorical; he does not require an answer. In the fourth line, he asks if they were sleeping like the "Seven Sleepers". This is a reference to a story regarding seven children buried alive by a Roman Emperor. Rather than dying, they slept through their long entombment to be found almost 200 years later. The final three lines of the stanza answer his previous questions. He says, yes, of course, everything he said is truth. Anything he experienced before getting with his current lover was not real. It was only a fancy.

The second stanza is structured in a similar way in which the first four lines introduce a reader to another aspect of the relationship. He describes how now, in their "good morrow" they will live in happiness together. There will be no need to watch... one another out of fear." Their relationship is perfect. In the following lines, the speaker is proving that any temptation outside is worthless. His eyes are controlled by love, therefore everything he sees is transformed by his adoration. He speaks of a small room that contains everything on earth. There is no reason for him to leave the bedroom he shares with his lover. The next three lines make use of **anaphora** with the **repetition** of the starting word "Let". The speaker is telling his lover that now that he has this relationship the rest of the world means nothing.

The final stanza of the poem begins with the speaker looking into his lover's eyes. There he can see his own face and he knows her face appears in his eyes as well. Their heartfelt connection is evident within their faces. The next three lines, he compares their faces to two hemispheres of the actual world, their facial hemispheres are perfect. There are no "two better" in the universe. There is no "sharp north" or "declining west". The speaker sees himself and his lover as soulmates; they are the other's missing half. The last three lines speak on how a lack of balance can cause death. He makes clear that their love is

balanced physically and emotionally. Their perfect balance is accomplished due to the presence of the other. It is the combination of their emotion that keeps them together.

SETTING

'The Good Morrow is geographically set in England, specifically, around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.