



T18

## Batter my heart

One of the most powerful of the Holy Sonnets, written between 1609 and 1611, this poem deals with the poet's love of God through strikingly original images.

John Donne  
*Holy Sonnets*  
(1618)

Batter<sup>1</sup> my heart, three-personed God; for, you  
As yet but<sup>2</sup> knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend<sup>3</sup>;  
That<sup>4</sup> I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow<sup>5</sup> me, and bend  
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.

5 I, like an usurped town, to another due<sup>6</sup>,  
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy<sup>7</sup> in me, me should defend,  
But is captived<sup>8</sup>, and proves weak or untrue,

10 Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain<sup>9</sup>,  
But am betrothed unto your enemy<sup>10</sup>,  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot<sup>11</sup> again,

Take me to you, imprison me, for I  
Except you enthrall me<sup>12</sup>, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me<sup>13</sup>.

- 1 Batter. Colpisci ripetutamente, tempesta di colpi.  
2 As yet but. Fino a ora solamente.  
3 mend. Riparare, correggere.  
4 That. Affinché.  
5 o'erthrow. Abbatti, rovescia.  
6 due. Alleata.  
7 viceroy. Viceré.  
8 is captived. È fatta prigioniera.  
9 fain. Volentieri.  
10 betrothed unto your enemy. Fidanzato con il tuo nemico.  
11 knot. Nodo, legame.  
12 for I ... me. Poiché io, se tu non mi catturi.  
13 you ravish me. Mi violenti.

### VISUAL ANALYSIS

- 1 READ the poem and identify its two parts. Then write a heading to each section.
- 2 LOOK at the visual analysis of the text and write down what each highlight and colour represents in the spaces provided.

<span style="background-color: yellow;"> </span>	.....
<span style="background-color: lightgreen;"> </span>	.....
<span style="background-color: lightblue;"> </span>	.....
<span style="background-color: pink;"> </span>	.....
<span style="background-color: red;"> </span>	.....

- 3 ANSWER the following questions.

- 1 How is the relationship between the poet and God connoted?
- 2 The opening of the poem has no introduction or setting. What is the effect of this device?
- 3 What are the features of Metaphysical poetry (→ 2.7) that can be found in this poem?

**4 COMPLETE** the summary with the words from the box.

reshape

imprison

purify

divorce

chaste

knocked at

overthrow

sinful

free from

evil

ravishes

religious



*Batter my heart* is a (1) ..... sonnet, written in the Petrarchan form. The poet asks the 'three-personed God' to 'batter' his heart (line 1) and (2) ..... it because he has deviated from the holy path to the (3) ..... one. God has (4) ..... him, blown his breath and lighted the fire of his love to (5) ..... him. But all these methods have ended without gaining the objective. So God should (6) ..... the poet and bend his force to break, blow and make him new and (7) ..... sin. Like a town that has been invaded by the enemy, the poet tries to admit God into his heart, but Reason, which is God's viceroy, has been captured by (8) ..... and is 'weak or untrue' (line 8). Yet the poet says that he loves God and wants to be loved in return. The poet wishes he could (9) ..... to break the nuptial knot and asks God to take him with him, (10) ..... him and never let him free; for until he is God's prisoner, he says, he will never be free and he will never be (11) ..... until God (12) ..... him.