

# Batter my heart essay



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John Donne was a 16th and 17th century English priest, poet, dean, and lawyer. "Batter My Heart" is the fourteenth and one of the most well-known of the Holy Sonnets. The sonnets were written during a hard time in his life in which he was struggling financially and was in the midst of converting from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism. The last few sonnets were thought to have been written after the death of his wife causing his writing to be more in depth and focused around that tragedy (John Donne).

The rest of the Holy Sonnets reflect on Donne's "religious convictions and address the themes of divine judgment, divine love, and humble penance" (Clements). Donne also reflects on personal hardships and his writing is heavily influenced by Renaissance style. The Holy Sonnet XIV is especially an example of these themes. In John Donne's poem "Batter My Heart, Three Person'd God" he is crying out to God to save him from himself. Of the many themes and ideas displayed in the Holy Sonnets, "Batter My Heart" particularly presents the themes of divine love, humble penance, and shows his time of hardships.

Donne displays his conviction and personal hardships very clearly in this poem. He is speaking very humbly by begging God to remove him from the worldly sin he has fallen into. Donne knows he is "betroth'd" to God's enemy, but is aware of God's strength to "ravish" him. Donne's pleading with God and willingness to submit to God show the divine love Donne has for God and that God has for him. The themes of "Batter My Heart" closely tie into the mood because Donne can easily make the reader feel what he feels. His longing for repentance is shown in his language and metaphors.

He uses strong words and phrases like “Batter my heart,” “break, blowe, burn and make me new.” He feels guilty for his sins and knows that he deserves the wrath of God. The strong love that Donne discusses stirs emotion in the reader so they can understand Donne’s reverence for God and why he is pleading. Donne uses metaphors, irony, imagery, and strong language that also evoke emotion in the reader. Knowing that Donne does not literally want God to batter his heart it is inferred by his strong phrases like these how truly sorry he is for his wrongs.

Donne follows the traditional rules of a sonnet in “Batter My Heart;” it has 14 lines and a regular rhyme scheme. Also, every four lines is a quatrain that contains its own meaning. The first quatrain is one sentence in which Donne uses violent imagery to ask God to “break, blow, [and] burn” him treating himself as glass and God as a smith. In the second quatrain Donne compares himself to an “unsurpt town.” He contradicts himself again saying how he wants to let God into his life, but reasons against it because of his sinful nature.

In the last six lines Donne refers to the Bible when he tells God to divorce him from the enemy knowing that the church body is the bride of Christ. Though Donne seems so sincere in his pleading with God to free him from his sins, he ironically asks to be imprisoned again. He seems to contradict himself by being captured by one thing then being captured by another, but finds freedom in God. Donne definitely identifies himself as a man of God and his attitude toward God is very clear. Through his begging the reader can feel enough emotion to be able to make his their own prayer. Asking for such punishment from God is very humbling for anyone.

Donne is aware of his sins so he is in emotional and spiritual distress and is sincere about his pleading for God to “ravish” him. Donne knows God is his only hope for forgiveness. “Batter My Heart” well exemplifies the themes of many of the Holy Sonnets. The structure and rhyme scheme reveal the Renaissance time period and his literary devices of metaphors and strong language show Donne’s attitude and the mood of the poem. His themes are evidently displayed in each quatrain as he expresses his humility before God, his love for God, and his sincerity in insisting for the forgiveness of his sins.