CAPITOLO

2

Wit and Devotion: the Metaphysical Poets

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." — John Donne, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, XVII (1624)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can explain how the new astronomy, religious anxiety and the court of Charles I form the background of Metaphysical poetry.
2. I can describe the features of Metaphysical poetry — the conceit, argument, dramatic openings, wit — and say where the label comes from.
3. I can analyse and paraphrase poems by Donne and Marvell, following their argument step by step, and compare Marvell with Horace and Catullus.
4. I can use determiners and quantifiers at B2 (*each / every*, *all / whole*, *few / a few*, *none*) and uncountable nouns correctly.
5. I can offer and compare readings of a poem, and write a poem built on a conceit with a writer's note.

INDICE DEL CAPITOLO

2.1 History and Society: the New Philosophy and the Court of Charles I 2
2.2 Literature: the Metaphysical Poets 5
2.3 Texts: Compasses, Death and Time 9
2.4 Language: Determiners and Quantifiers 16
2.5 Skills: Interpreting a Poem, Writing a Conceit 20
2.6 Connections: Marino, Horace and Catullus 24

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In January 1610, in Padua, a professor of mathematics turned a telescope he had built himself towards Jupiter and saw three tiny points of light beside the planet; a few nights later there were four, and they kept changing place. They were moons. A year later, in England, a poet wrote that "new Philosophy calls all in doubt". This chapter is about the poets who lived through that shock — **John Donne**, **George Herbert** and **Andrew Marvell** — and who wrote about love, God and death as if they were arguing a case: with logic, with learning, and with comparisons so daring that they still surprise readers four centuries later.

You will read a farewell built on a pair of compasses, a sonnet that tells Death it will die, and a love poem constructed like a logical proof. You will see where the name "Metaphysical" comes from (it was not a compliment), meet Marino and the Italian Baroque, and go back to the Latin poets you read in class — Horace and Catullus — who first told a beloved that time is short. In the language section you will work on determiners and quantifiers; in the skills section you will discuss different readings of a poem and write a poem of your own built on a single conceit.

2.1 History and Society: the New Philosophy and the Court of Charles I

For most of the sixteenth century educated Europeans still described the universe as Aristotle and Ptolemy had: a motionless Earth at the centre, wrapped in a series of transparent spheres that carried the Moon, the Sun, the planets and the fixed stars. Everything below the Moon was made of the four elements and was subject to change and decay; everything above it was perfect and unchanging. In English 3 (chapter 13) you saw Copernicus move the Sun to the centre in 1543. In the first decades of the seventeenth century that old picture began to fall apart. Figura 2.1 sets the poets of this chapter beside the astronomers and the kings of their time.

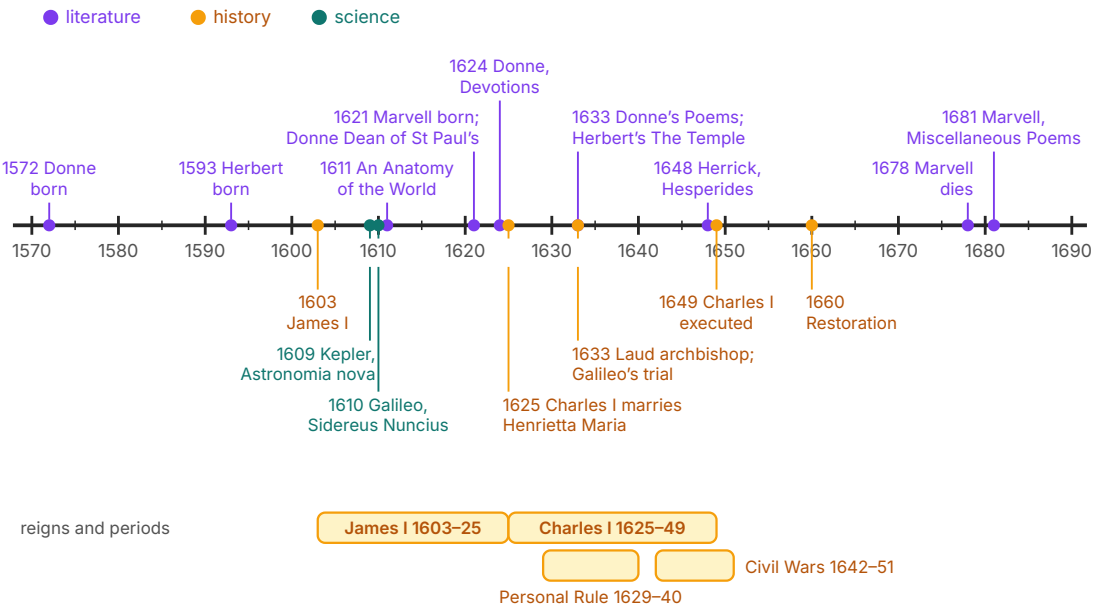


Figura 2.1 The age of the Metaphysical poets on a proportional time axis, 1570–1690: literary events above the axis (violet), historical events (amber) and scientific ones (teal) below; the bands at the bottom show reigns and periods. Donne, Herbert and Marvell lived through the new astronomy and the reign of Charles I, but their poems reached most readers in print only after their deaths (1633, 1633, 1681).

2.1.1 A new sky: Kepler and Galileo

In 1609 the German astronomer Johannes Kepler published *Astronomia nova* ("The New Astronomy"), in which he showed that the orbit of Mars is not a circle but an ellipse — a shocking idea for a culture that saw the circle as the perfect shape of the heavens. In March 1610 Galileo Galilei, professor of mathematics at the University of Padua, published in Venice a short Latin book called *Sidereus Nuncius* ("The Starry Messenger"). Looking through a telescope that he had improved himself, he reported that the surface of the Moon had mountains and valleys like the Earth, that the Milky Way was a mass of stars too faint to see one by one, and that four "stars" were circling Jupiter. He called them the Medicean stars, after his future patron, Cosimo II de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany.

Each discovery damaged the old order. A rough, mountainous Moon meant that the heavens were not made of a perfect substance; a planet with its own moons meant that the Earth was not the only centre round which things turned. Contemporaries called the new ideas the **new philosophy** (*la nuova filosofia*): what we now call science was then "natural philosophy". The new philosophy did not win at once. Many scholars still defended the old system, and in 1633 Galileo was tried by the Roman Inquisition and forced to abjure his support for Copernicus. But

from 1610 every well-read European knew that the universe of the schoolbooks might be wrong.

2.1.2 “All in pieces”: a world in doubt

John Donne felt the shock at once. In 1611 he published *An Anatomy of the World*, a long poem on the death of Elizabeth Drury, the fourteen-year-old daughter of his patron Sir Robert Drury. In it the death of one girl becomes a sign that the whole world is sick and breaking up, and the new astronomy is part of the evidence:

> And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> [...]
> ’Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
>
> John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611), ll. 205–206, 213 (original spelling, text of H. J. C. Grierson’s edition, 1912)

The “element of fire” was a sphere of fire that the old cosmology placed just below the Moon; the new astronomers found no trace of it. Donne is not writing a scientific report: he takes the uncertainty of the scientists and turns it into a picture of a world without *coherence*, in which the parts no longer hold together — in the sky, in the state, in the family. That feeling of living among broken certainties runs through much of the poetry of the next thirty years.

2.1.3 Faith, doubt and devotion

Religion was the other great source of anxiety. As you saw in chapter 1, the Church of England contained Puritans, who wanted plain worship and preached predestination, as well as people who loved ceremony, music and beautiful churches; Catholics were a minority under constant suspicion. Donne himself was born in 1572 into a Catholic family that counted Sir Thomas More among its relatives. In 1593 his younger brother Henry was arrested after a Catholic priest was found in his rooms, and died of the plague in prison. Donne later conformed to the Church of England, but his religious poems still sound like the words of a man who has chosen his faith and is not sure he will be saved.

In the 1620s and 1630s the quarrels grew sharper. William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633, imposed ceremony and uniformity on the parishes, and many Puritans saw this as a slow return towards Rome. At the same time Christians of every party practised private **devotion** (*devozione*): daily prayer, the examination of one’s conscience, meditation on death and judgement. Religious poetry, from Donne’s *Holy Sonnets* to Herbert’s *The Temple*, grew directly out of these habits: it is the voice of a soul talking to God, often in the middle of a crisis.

2.1.4 The court of Charles I and Henrietta Maria

Charles I came to the throne in 1625 and in the same year married Henrietta Maria, the Catholic daughter of Henri IV of France and of the Florentine Marie de' Medici; she kept her own Catholic chapel and priests at court, which many Protestants resented. Their court was refined, cosmopolitan and very expensive. Charles was one of the greatest art collectors of his age: the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck became his principal painter in 1632, and Rubens's painted ceiling for the Banqueting House in Whitehall was put in place in 1636. The masques that you studied in English 3 (chapter 14) became more spectacular than ever. But, as chapter 1 explained, from 1629 to 1640 Charles governed without calling Parliament, and the tensions of those years ended in the Civil War of 1642, the subject of chapter 3. Marvell, the youngest poet of this chapter, would live through the war, the execution of the king and the Restoration.

2.1.5 Patrons and manuscripts

As at the Tudor court (English 3, chapter 9), a poet's readers were first of all his friends and his patrons. Poems were copied by hand and passed round in manuscript collections; printing one's love poems was not what a gentleman did. Donne printed very few of his poems; the first collection, *Poems*, appeared in 1633, two years after his death. Herbert's *The Temple* came out in the same year, a few months after he died, and most of Marvell's lyrics were printed only in 1681, three years after his death. In other words, the general public met these poets only when they could no longer explain themselves — one reason why their reputation has risen and fallen so dramatically.

2.2 Literature: the Metaphysical Poets

2.2.1 A label from the critics

Metaphysical poetry (*poesia metafisica*) is the name later given to the learned, argumentative poetry of Donne and of the poets who wrote in a similar way in the first half of the seventeenth century: Herbert, Marvell, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan and Abraham Cowley. The poets never called themselves "Metaphysical" and never formed a school with a programme. The word comes from their critics. In 1693 John Dryden wrote that Donne "affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses", that is, he fills even his love poems with philosophy. In 1779, in his *Life of Cowley*, Samuel Johnson turned the remark into a category: he wrote that "a race of writers" appeared "that may be termed the metaphysical poets". Johnson admired their learning but disliked their style: in their poetry, he said, "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together". The label stuck — and readers who later loved these poets kept it.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *I poeti metafisici formavano un movimento e si definivano "metafisici".*

✓ *Metaphysical* è un'etichetta posteriore e in origine polemica: Dryden (1693) e soprattutto Johnson (1779) la usano per criticare uno stile. I poeti non si conoscevano tutti tra loro e non scrissero un manifesto. E "metafisico" non vuol dire che parlino soprattutto di metafisica: indica un modo di ragionare dotto e sorprendente, anche nelle poesie d'amore.

2.2.2 The metaphysical conceit

In English 3 (chapter 9) you met the Petrarchan *conceit*: the lady as a deer, the lover as a ship in a storm. A **metaphysical conceit** (*concetto metafisico*) is a more extreme kind. It joins two things that seem to have nothing in common — two lovers and a pair of compasses, a flea and a marriage bed, a tear and a globe — and then develops the comparison step by step, often through a whole poem, until the likeness seems not only clever but true. Its images come less from nature than from the new knowledge of the age: geometry, astronomy, maps, alchemy, law and money. The reader's first reaction is surprise, sometimes laughter; the second, if the poem works, is to be convinced.

2.2.3 Argument, drama and the speaking voice

The conceit rarely comes alone. First, these poems are **arguments**: they try to persuade someone — a woman, God, Death itself — and they move forward with *if*, *but* and *therefore*, like a lawyer's speech. Secondly, they often begin **dramatically**, in the middle of a scene: "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love" ("The Canonization"), "Busy old fool, unruly sun" ("The Sun Rising"). Thirdly, their rhythm follows the **speaking voice**, with questions, interruptions and exclamations, rather than the smooth music of the Elizabethan lyric. They love the **paradox** (*paradosso*), a statement that seems to contradict itself and yet contains a truth: "Death, thou shalt die." The quality that holds all this together is what the age called *wit* (English 3, chapter 12): the speed of a mind that finds connections nobody expected.

IN SINTESI

- **Conceit:** a comparison between very unlike things, often drawn from science, law or trade, developed logically.
- **Argument:** the poem tries to persuade; connectors such as *if… but… therefore*.
- **Drama:** an abrupt opening, a speaker addressing someone in a precise situation.
- **Voice:** colloquial words, irregular rhythm, questions and exclamations.
- **Wit and paradox:** learning used to surprise; contradictions that reveal a truth.
- **Themes:** love of body and soul, God and salvation, time and death.

2.2.4 John Donne (1572–1631)

Donne's life explains the two voices of his poetry. As a young man he studied at Oxford and at Lincoln's Inn, one of the London schools of law, sailed with the Earl of Essex to Cadiz (1596) and the Azores (1597), and became secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, one of the most powerful officials in England. In 1601 he married Anne More, the teenage niece of Egerton's wife, without her family's consent. He lost his post, was briefly imprisoned, and spent the next years in poverty with a fast-growing family. Many of the love poems later collected as *Songs and Sonnets* (the title was first used in the edition of 1635) probably belong to these years: witty, sensual, sometimes cynical, sometimes deeply tender. Anne died in 1617 after the birth of their twelfth child.

In 1615, after years of hesitation, Donne was ordained a priest of the Church of England; in 1621 he became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London and the most famous preacher of his day. His nineteen *Holy Sonnets*, whose dates are still debated, speak to God with the same passion and the same arguments that his earlier poems addressed to women. During a dangerous illness in 1623 he wrote the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), meditations on each stage of his sickness. Hearing a church bell ring for someone's death, he wrote the sentence that has made him famous far beyond poetry: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." He died in 1631.

2.2.5 George Herbert (1593–1633)

George Herbert was born into a noble Welsh family, was Public Orator of the University of Cambridge from 1620 and seemed set for a career at court. Instead he was ordained and, from 1630 until his death in 1633, served as rector of Bemerton, a small country parish near Salisbury. His poems, collected in *The Temple* (1633), record the quarrels and reconciliations of a soul with God in a language that is simple, musical and conversational. According to his biographer Izaak Walton, Herbert sent the manuscript from his deathbed to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, who was to print it or burn it as he thought best.

Herbert never stopped experimenting with form. In a **pattern poem** (*carme figurato*) the shape of the lines on the page imitates the subject: "The Altar" is printed in the shape of an altar, and each stanza of "Easter Wings" in the shape of a pair of wings (Figura 2.2). As the speaker describes the Fall of man and his own suffering, the lines shrink until only two syllables are left — "Most poore"; then, as he asks to rise "With thee", like a lark, the lines grow again. The idea comes from antiquity: about 300 BC the Greek poet Simmias of Rhodes wrote a poem shaped like wings, preserved in the *Greek Anthology*. Herbert's originality is to make the shape part of the theology: the soul must fall before it can fly.

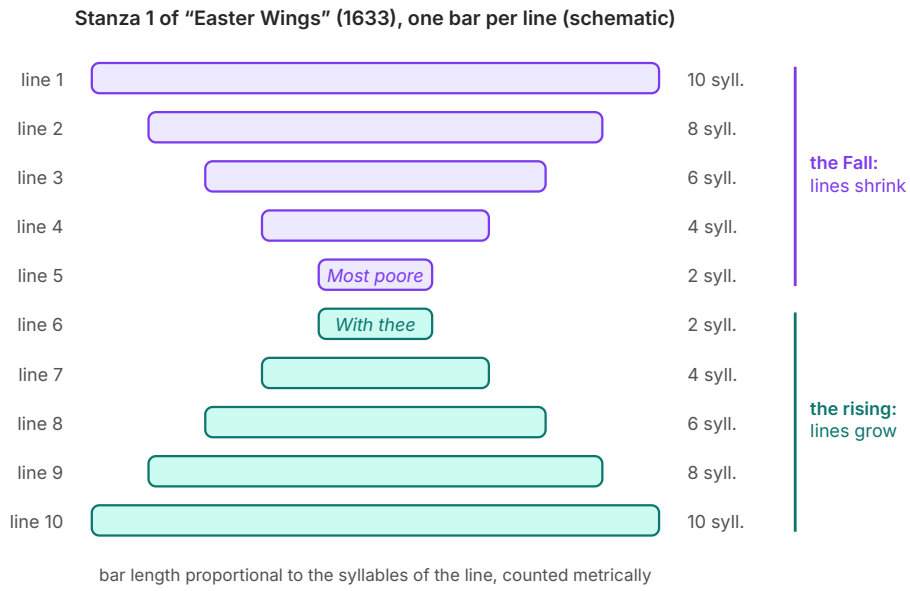


Figura 2.2 The shape of the first stanza of George Herbert’s “Easter Wings” (*The Temple*, 1633), drawn schematically: the ten lines shrink from ten syllables to two (“Most poore”) and grow back to ten, so that the stanza looks like a pair of wings. Syllables are counted metrically (*harmoniously* as four syllables). In the 1633 edition each stanza was printed sideways, filling a page.

2.2.6 Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

Andrew Marvell grew up in Hull, in Yorkshire, studied at Cambridge and travelled in Europe in the 1640s, while England was at war. Around 1650 he became tutor to the daughter of the Parliamentary general Thomas Fairfax; in 1657 he was appointed assistant to John Milton, Latin Secretary to Oliver Cromwell’s government (chapter 3), and from 1659 until his death he sat in Parliament as Member for Hull. In his lifetime he was known as a politician and a writer of prose and verse satire. Most of his lyrics — “The Garden”, “The Definition of Love”, “To His Coy Mistress” — appeared only in *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681), published by a woman who presented herself as his widow. Marvell joins Donne’s argumentative wit to a classical balance and a cooler, more ironic voice.

2.2.7 Carpe diem and the Cavalier poets

“To His Coy Mistress” belongs to one of the oldest traditions of European love poetry: **carpe diem** (*cogli l’attimo*), from Horace’s ode to Leuconoe (*Odes* I.11), “seize the day”: enjoy the present, because youth is short and death certain. In seventeenth-century England the theme was a favourite of the **Cavalier poets** (*poeti cavalieri*) — Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace, Sir John Suckling — royalists who admired Ben Jonson (chapter 1) and wrote polished,

musical, often light lyrics. Their name comes from the "Cavaliers", the king's supporters in the Civil War. The best-known Cavalier version of the theme opens Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time", printed in *Hesperides* (1648):

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
> Old time is still a-flying:
> And this same flower that smiles to-day
> To-morrow will be dying.
>
> Robert Herrick, "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time", st. 1 (*Hesperides*, 1648; text of the Project Gutenberg edition)

Herrick sings: one clear image, the rose, and a smooth, regular rhythm. Marvell, as you will see in T3, argues, and his images are of tombs and worms. The theme is the same; the Cavalier and the Metaphysical treat it in opposite ways.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Forgotten and found again. After Johnson's verdict the Metaphysical poets were read by few people for more than a century; Donne was admired by Coleridge, but most readers preferred Milton and Pope. In 1912 the Scottish scholar H. J. C. Grierson published a careful edition of Donne's poems, and in 1921 an anthology, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*. Reviewing it, the poet T. S. Eliot praised these writers for thinking and feeling at the same time. From then on Donne became one of the most studied poets in English — and the compasses one of its most famous images. You will meet Eliot next year.

2.3 Texts: Compasses, Death and Time

The three texts show the Metaphysical manner in three moods: a calm farewell, a defiant challenge, and a seduction that proceeds like a proof. Read each one aloud before you analyse it: these poems were written to sound like a person talking.

2.3.1 T1 · John Donne, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", stanzas 7–9

A **valediction** (*commiato*) is a poem or speech of farewell. The speaker is about to leave on a journey and asks the woman he loves not to weep: ordinary lovers need to be physically together, but their love is a love of souls, and distance cannot break it. Izaak Walton later said that Donne wrote it for his wife before a journey to France in 1611; the story is possible but not documented. In stanzas 1–6 the speaker asks for a parting as quiet as the death of a good man and says that their two souls, being "one", will not break but stretch, "Like gold to aery thinness beat". The last three stanzas introduce the most famous conceit in English.

Tabella 2.1 T1 — Donne, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", ll. 25–36. Modern-spelling text of Wikisource, checked word by word against H. J. C. Grierson's old-spelling edition (*The Poems of John Donne*, 1912); line numbers as in Grierson.

If they be two, they are two so	25
As stiff twin compasses are two;	
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show	
To move, but doth, if th' other do.	
And though it in the centre sit,	
Yet, when the other far doth roam,	30
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	35
And makes me end where I begun.	

Glosses. *compasses*: the instrument for drawing circles (*compasso*), two legs or "feet" joined by a hinge · *fix'd foot*: the leg that stays in the centre · *makes no show / To move*: does not seem to move · *doth*: does · *hearkens after*: listens for, bends towards · *erect*: upright · *obliquely*: at an angle, not in a straight line · *just*: exact, perfect · *begun*: began (an old past form).

Analysis

Form. The poem consists of nine quatrains rhyming *abab*, in **iambic tetrameter** (*tetrametro giambico*): lines of four iambic feet, eight syllables. The short, regular lines give a tone of calm control, which suits a speaker who argues that true lovers do not need tears.

The conceit. The two lovers are the two legs of one pair of compasses (Figura 2.3). She is the fixed foot in the centre; he is the foot that travels round. They are "two", but joined at the top, so they can move apart without separating. When he goes far away, she "leans" towards him; when he comes back, she "grows erect" again. Her steadiness keeps his circle perfect and brings him back to his starting point. Notice the method: every stanza adds one property of the instrument and gives it a meaning, as in a geometrical demonstration.

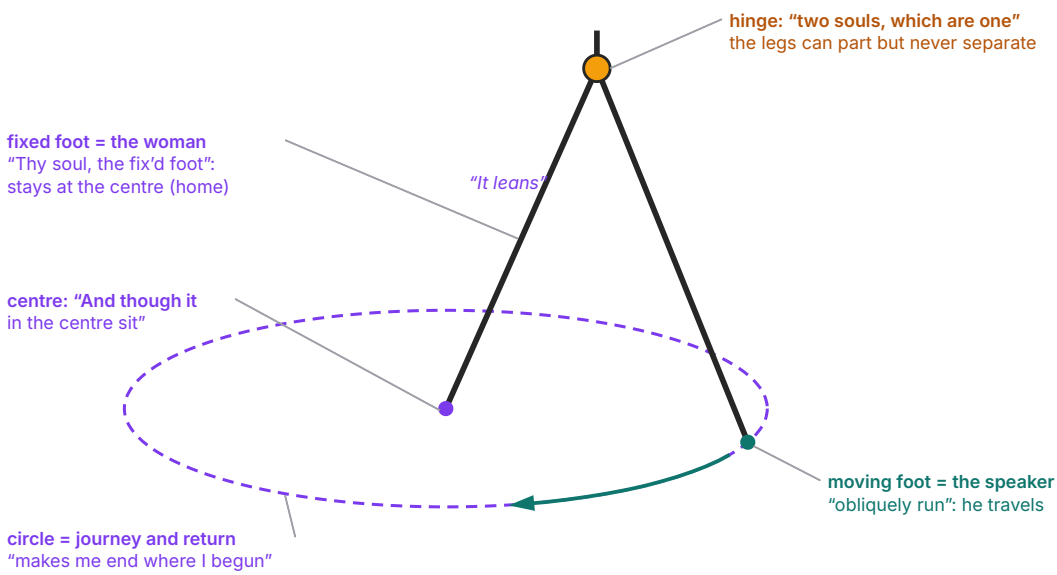


Figura 2.3 The compasses conceit of T1 mapped onto the instrument (simplified, seen at an angle). The fixed foot in the centre is the woman who stays at home; the moving foot is the speaker who travels; the hinge joins the two souls; the circle, which closes on its starting point, is the journey and the return.

Language and themes. The words are plain and technical — *centre*, *foot*, *circle*, *obliquely* — and the voice is intimate (*thou*, *thy*). The circle was an ancient emblem of perfection and eternity, so the last line also suggests a love that is complete. Some readers hear a bodily double meaning in “grows erect”: Donne’s wit often joins body and soul in a single image.

1. Where is the speaker going, and what does he ask the woman not to do?
2. Which lover is the fixed foot and which the moving foot? Quote the words that tell you.
3. What does the fixed foot do when the other “far doth roam”? What does this reveal about the woman?
4. Why is a circle a suitable image for the end of a journey? Consider geometry and meaning.
5. Johnson wondered whether “absurdity or ingenuity” had the better claim in this comparison. Which do you think, and why?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Paraphrasing two lines of T1 (ll. 27–28).

1. **Find the subject and the verbs.** Subject: *Thy soul*; in apposition: *the fix'd foot*. Verbs: *makes no show / To move* and *doth*.
2. **Fill in what is understood.** *doth* = "does [move]"; *if th' other do* = "if the other [foot] does [move]" (the old subjunctive *do* after *if*).
3. **Rewrite in modern English.** "Your soul, which is the fixed foot, does not seem to move, but it does move if the other foot moves."
4. **Comment.** The woman looks still, but she responds to every movement of her lover: her stillness is a form of attention, not of indifference.

2.3.2 T2 · John Donne, Holy Sonnet "Death, be not proud"

This is one of Donne's nineteen *Holy Sonnets*: number X in the order of the 1635 edition, which Grierson and most later editions follow (in the first edition, 1633, it was number VI). The title is simply the first words; editors usually add a comma after "Death". The speaker addresses Death directly as if it were a person who could hear him — a figure called **apostrophe** (*apostrofe*) — and proves, step by step, that Death has no reason to be proud.

Tabella 2.2 T2 — Donne, Holy Sonnet X, complete. Text of H. J. C. Grierson's edition (1912); spelling modernised by the editors, punctuation as in Grierson. The accent in *callèd* is the editors'.

Death be not proud, though some have callèd 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,	5
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,	
And soonest our best men with thee do go,	
Rest of their bones, and souls' delivery.	
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,	
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,	10
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.	

Glosses. *callèd*: pronounced as two syllables, *call-ed*, for the metre · *overthrow*: defeat, destroy · *which but thy pictures be*: which are only images of you · *then*: therefore · *soonest*: most willingly · *delivery*: liberation · *poppy*: opium, a drug that brings sleep · *charms*: magic spells · *stroke*: blow · *swell'st thou*: are you puffed up with pride (literally "do you swell").

Analysis

Form. The rhyme scheme is *abba abba cddc ee*: a Petrarchan octave followed by a sestet that closes, the English way, with a couplet. The volta comes at line 9, where argument turns into insult — "Thou art slave…" — and the couplet delivers the conclusion.

The argument. Donne reasons like a debater. (1) The people you think you kill do not die. (2) Rest and sleep are only your images, and they give pleasure; so you, the original, must give much more — which is why the best people go with you willingly. (3) You have no power of your own: you serve fate, chance, kings and desperate men, you live with poison, war and illness, and drugs or spells give sleep better than you do. (4) Conclusion: after one short sleep we wake for ever, and death itself will end. The final words are a perfect paradox: "death, thou shalt die."

Language. The poem is dense with monosyllables and heavy stresses ("Die not, poor death"), and the many commas and caesuras break the lines into the pauses of a speaking

voice. The whole argument rests on a premise it never states: the Christian belief in the resurrection.

1. Find the lines where the speaker gives Death orders or insults it. What tone do they create?
2. Explain in your own words the argument of lines 5–8.
3. Line 9 calls Death a "slave". To whom, and why is this humiliating?
4. Find two paradoxes in the sonnet.
5. Does the speaker sound completely confident, or is he trying to convince himself? Give reasons.

2.3.3 T3 · Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress", ll. 1–4 and 21–32

A man speaks to a woman who keeps refusing him. The poem is constructed like a **syllogism** (*sillogismo*), a logical argument made of two premises and a conclusion (Figura 2.4). Part 1 (ll. 1–20): *if* we had all the time in the world, your shyness would be no crime, and I would spend centuries praising you. Part 2 (ll. 21–32): *but* time is short and death is coming. Part 3 (ll. 33–46): *therefore* let us love now, while we are young.

Tabella 2.3 T3 — Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress", ll. 1–4 and 21–32. Text of *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681), as transcribed in Wikisource; spelling and capitals modernised by the editors, punctuation as in 1681.

Had we but world enough, and time,	
This coyness Lady were no crime.	
We would sit down, and think which way	
To walk, and pass our long love's day.	
[...]	
But at my back I always hear	
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:	
And yonder all before us lie	
Deserts of vast eternity.	
Thy beauty shall no more be found,	25
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound	
My echoing song: then worms shall try	
That long preserv'd virginity:	
And your quaint honour turn to dust;	
And into ashes all my lust.	30
The grave's a fine and private place,	
But none I think do there embrace.	

Glosses. *coy*: shy, reluctant to show love · *mistress*: here, the woman he courts (not a lover in the modern sense) · *Had we*: if we had · *were*: would be · *winged chariot*: the flying carriage of Time, an image from classical art · *yonder*: over there · *vault*: tomb · *try*: test, attack · *quaint*: proud, overscrupulous (an old meaning).

Analysis

Form. The poem is written in rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter: quick, short lines that suit the speaker's urgency. Line 1 begins with an inverted conditional (*Had we = If we had*), a structure you will study in chapter 8.

The argument. In part 1 the speaker pretends to accept the woman's slowness, with comic exaggeration: he would love her "ten years before the Flood" and spend "an hundred years" praising her eyes. Part 2 opens with *But*, and everything changes: Time is a chariot close behind him, and eternity stretches ahead like a desert. The images are of silence and decay — the

marble tomb, the song that no longer echoes, dust and ashes. The last couplet of the passage is a cold, ironic understatement: the grave is "fine and private", but nobody embraces there.

Themes. This is *carpe diem*, but far darker than Herrick's roses, and it is addressed to a woman whose answer we never hear. Readers disagree about the speaker: is he a clever seducer using logic as a trick, or a man genuinely frightened by time and death? The poem supports both readings, and part of its power is that it will not choose.

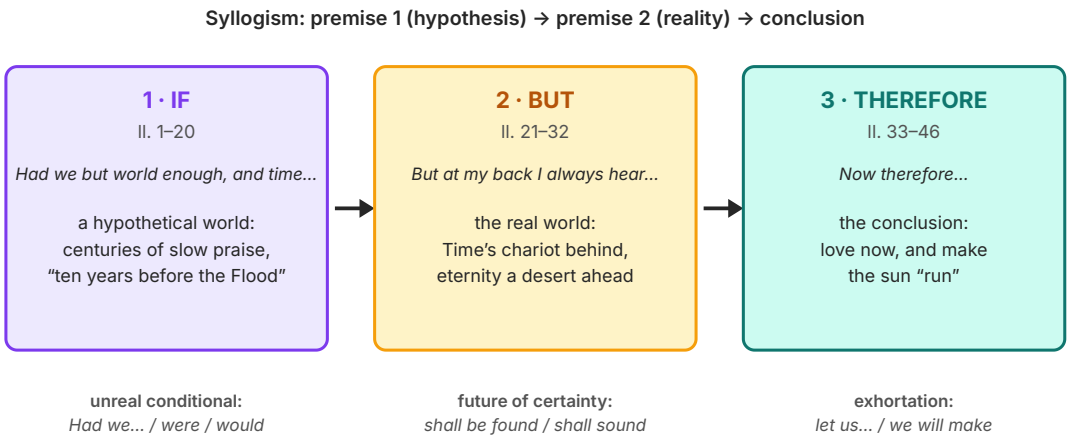


Figura 2.4 The three-part argument of "To His Coy Mistress" as a syllogism: a hypothetical world of unlimited time (*Had we...*), the reality of time and death (*But...*), and the conclusion (*Now therefore...*). Each part has its own image of time and its own grammar.

1. What does the woman do, or refuse to do, that provokes the poem?
2. Which word opens part 2? How does the tone change?
3. Explain the two images of time in ll. 21–24: what is behind the speaker, and what is in front?
4. Which images in ll. 25–30 describe death? Which senses do they appeal to?
5. Explain the irony of ll. 31–32.
6. Compare the attitude to death in T2 and T3. Which poem is more hopeful, and why?

2.4 Language: Determiners and Quantifiers

A **determiner** (*determinante*) is a word placed before a noun to say which thing we mean or how much of it: *the*, *this*, *my*, *each*, *some*. A **quantifier** (*quantificatore*) is a determiner that expresses quantity: *all*, *most*, *few*, *a little*, *no*. You have used them since English 1, and in English 3 (chapter 5) you combined them with relative clauses (*most of which*). At B2 the challenge is precision: choosing between forms that look alike and matching each one with the right kind of noun. Figura 2.5 places the main quantifiers on a scale.

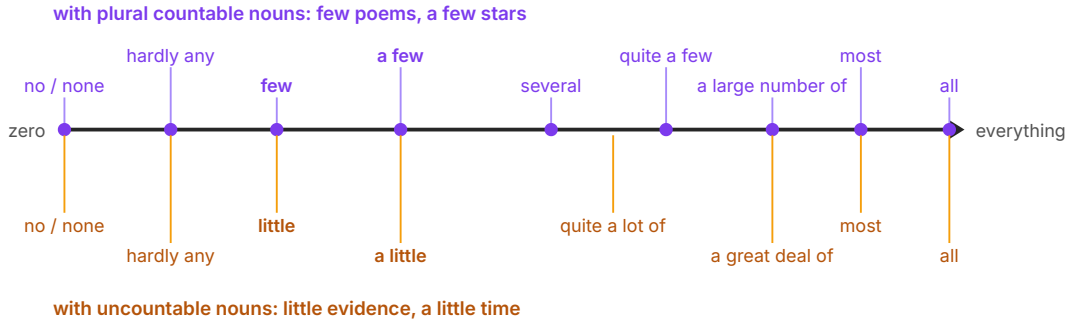


Figura 2.5 Quantifiers on a scale from zero to everything: above the line, those used with plural countable nouns (violet); below, those used with uncountable nouns (amber). Positions are approximate: *few* and *little* stress that the amount is small, *a few* and *a little* that it exists.

2.4.1 *Each* and *every*; *all* and *whole*

Tabella 2.4 *Each*, *every*, *all* and *whole*: form and use

Form	Use	Example
each + singular noun	two or more, considered one at a time	*Each* stanza adds a new property of the compasses.
each of + *the* / *my* / *these* + plural	singular verb in formal writing	*Each of* the three poets *has* a section in this chapter.
every + singular noun	three or more, seen as a whole group (“all without exception”)	*Every* line of T1 has eight syllables.
every one of + plural	never ✗ *every of*	*Every one of* the *Holy Sonnets* has fourteen lines.
all (of) the + plural or uncountable	the total number or amount	*All the* moons / *all the* evidence
the whole + singular countable	“complete, every part of it”	*the whole* poem (= *all of the* poem)

With exactly two things, use *each*: *The compasses have a point on each leg* (✗ *on every leg*). *Every* can be modified — *almost every*, *nearly every*, *every single* — and is used for regular intervals: *every ten years*, *every other day*. *Whole* is not normally used with uncountable nouns: *all the information* (✗ *the whole information*). With periods of time both work: *all night* = *the whole night*.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Each / every / all / whole. L'italiano ha *ogni* e *ciascuno*; l'inglese distingue: *each* = "ciascuno", gli elementi uno per uno (anche due soltanto: *in each hand*); *every* = "ogni", tutti senza eccezione (almeno tre). Entrambi vogliono il nome e il verbo al **singolare**: *every poem has*, non ✗ *every poems have*. *Each* può diventare pronome (*each of them*, *they each have*); *every* no: *every one of them*. "Tutto il / tutta la" + nome numerabile singolare = *the whole* (*tutta la poesia* = *the whole poem*); con i non numerabili e i plurali si usa *all (of) the* (*tutto il tempo* = *all the time*).

2.4.2 *Few*, *a few*, *little*, *a little* and large amounts

Few and *a few* go with plural countable nouns; *little* and *a little* with uncountable nouns. The article changes the point of view. Without it, the meaning is negative: "not many, not much — less than we would like". With it, the meaning is positive: "some, a small but real amount". Compare *Few readers liked Donne in the eighteenth century* (almost nobody) with *A few readers still admired him* (there were some). In British English *quite a few* means "a fairly large number": *Quite a few of Donne's sermons survive in print*. *Only a few* and *very little* are frequent: *Very little is certain about the dates of the Holy Sonnets*.

In formal writing, large quantities are expressed with *a great deal of* or *a large amount of* + uncountable noun (singular verb) and *a large number of* + plural noun (plural verb): *A great deal of learning goes into every conceit*; *A large number of copies were made by hand*. *Hardly any* means "almost no": *Hardly any of Marvell's lyrics were printed in his lifetime*.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Few / a few, little / a little. *Few* = "pochi" (troppo pochi), *a few* = "alcuni, qualche"; *little* = "poco", *a little* = "un po'". Una sola parola, *a*, rovescia il tono: *There is little hope* ("c'è poca speranza", quasi nessuna) / *There is a little hope* ("c'è un po' di speranza"). *A large number of* + plurale + verbo plurale; *a great deal of* + non numerabile + verbo singolare. *Hardly any* = "quasi nessuno, quasi niente". In italiano "qualche" vuole il singolare (*qualche poesia*), mentre *a few* vuole il plurale: *a few poems*.

2.4.3 *No*, *none* and *any*

No is a determiner and always comes before a noun: *no man*, *no time*. *None* is a pronoun and stands alone or with *of*: *none of the poems*, *none of it*. After *none of* + plural noun, formal writing traditionally uses a singular verb and everyday English often a plural one; both are accepted: *None of the three poets was / were alive when his collected poems appeared*. Marvell, in T3, chooses the plural: "But none I think do there embrace." *Any* in an affirmative sentence means "no matter which": when Donne writes in the *Devotions* that "any man's death diminishes me", he means every death, whoever dies. Remember too *either* (one or the other of two) and *neither*

(not one and not the other), from English 2, Unit 12: *Neither Donne nor Herbert saw his English poems collected in print*.

2.4.4 Uncountable nouns that are countable in Italian

Some nouns are uncountable in English although their Italian equivalents are countable. They take a singular verb, never *a / an* and never a plural *-s*: *advice* (*consigli*), *information* (*informazioni*), *evidence* (*prove*), *research* (*ricerche*), *knowledge* (*conoscenze*), *news*, *progress*, *furniture*, *equipment*. To count them, use a **partitive** (*partitivo*), an expression that names one unit of something: *a piece of advice*, *a piece of evidence*, *a piece of news*, *an item of information*. *The mountains of the Moon were new evidence that the heavens could be imperfect*.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Every of the stanzas rhymes abab.* → ✓ *Every one of the stanzas / Each of the stanzas rhymes abab.*
✗ *The guide gave us some informations and an advice.* → ✓ *some information and a piece of advice.*
✗ *Galileo saw few moons near Jupiter and was delighted.* → ✓ *a few moons* (= alcune, non "poche").
✗ *I have read the whole poems of Herbert.* → ✓ *all (of) Herbert's poems.*
✗ *None student understood the conceit.* → ✓ *No student / None of the students understood the conceit.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

No / none / any; i non numerabili. *No* + nome = "nessun, nessuna"; *none* da solo o con *of* = "nessuno (di)". Dopo *none of* + plurale lo scritto formale preferisce il verbo singolare, il parlato il plurale: sono corretti entrambi. *Any* in frase affermativa = "qualsiasi": *any reader can see it*. Molti nomi che in italiano sono plurali e numerabili in inglese sono non numerabili e vogliono il verbo al singolare: *consigli* = *advice*, *informazioni* = *information*, *prove* = *evidence*, *ricerche* = *research*, *notizie* = *news* (*the news is good*), *mobili* = *furniture*. Per contarli: *a piece of*.

2.5 Skills: Interpreting a Poem, Writing a Conceit

2.5.1 Vocabulary: argument, body and soul, the heavens

Tabella 2.5 Argument, body and soul, the heavens: key words

Area	Words and phrases
Argument	*persuade* someone *to do* something · *prove* a point · *a premise*, *a conclusion* · *reason* (verb and noun) · *convince* someone *of* something · *wit*, *witty*
Body and soul	*soul* (*anima*) · *spirit* · *flesh* · *sin*, *sinner*, *sinful* · *grace* (God's free gift of love) · *salvation*, *be saved* · *repent* · *mortal* / *immortal*
The heavens	*the heavens* (literary: the sky) · *sphere* · *orbit* (noun and verb) · *planet* · *moon*, *satellite* · *telescope* · *constellation* · *eclipse*

Word formation: -ward(s). The suffix *-ward(s)* means "in the direction of": *upward(s)*, *downward(s)*, *inward(s)*, *outward(s)*, *forward(s)*, *backward(s)*, *homeward(s)*, *heavenward(s)*, *towards*. In British English the form with *-s* is the usual adverb (*The lark flies upwards*), the form without *-s* the adjective (*an upward flight*, *a homeward journey*). *Afterwards* is a time adverb ("later"). Do not mix them up with adjectives formed with *-ly*, such as *worldly* (English 3, chapter 6) and *heavenly*: Herbert turns his eyes heavenwards, away from worldly success.

2.5.2 Listening: the two-minute poem

Giulia and Marta are recording a short explainer, "The Two-Minute Poem", for the Link Reading Club blog. Listen (books closed) while two classmates read the script, then answer: what is the conceit of Marta's poem, which three details of the object does she develop, and which idea does she borrow from Donne?

Tabella 2.6 Listening script — The Two-Minute Poem

Speaker	Line
Giulia	Hello and welcome back to "The Two-Minute Poem", the Link Reading Club's weekly explainer. I'm Giulia, in Turin, and today I'm with Marta, who has written a metaphysical poem. About her phone.
Marta	Well, about my phone and its charger. Prof.ssa Rossi asked us to find a conceit like Donne's compasses: two very different things, one comparison, developed all the way.
Giulia	And you chose a charger. Why?
Marta	Because it's the one object that every one of us depends on and nobody writes poems about. In my poem the speaker is the phone, and the charger is the person she loves.
Giulia	So the charger is the fixed foot.
Marta	Exactly. It never leaves the wall by the bed. The phone goes out all day, talks to hundreds of people, takes photos, gets lost in a bag — and little by little the battery runs down. By the evening there's hardly any power left.
Giulia	And then she comes home.
Marta	She comes home, and the last stanza is the plug going in. I won't read it all, but it ends with something like "you give me back the words I spent".
Giulia	That's lovely. But I have to say, the first time I read it I found it a bit sad. The phone can't live without the charger.
Marta	A few people in class said that too. It could be read as a love poem, but another way of seeing it is as a poem about dependence — on a person, or on the phone itself. I didn't want to choose. Donne doesn't always choose either.
Giulia	What was the hardest part?
Marta	Keeping it going. A comparison takes one line; a conceit has to last. Each stanza needed a new detail of the charger with a new meaning: the cable is the tie between them, the little light shows that she's "full" again, and the cable is short, so she can only go so far while she's plugged in.
Giulia	Like the compasses: she can travel, but only on a circle.
Marta	Yes! And the light turning green is also the moment she can leave again. So it's a farewell poem as well — a very small valediction.
Giulia	A valediction in a bedroom. Next week it's Callum's turn from Bristol, with a poem about a bicycle chain. Thanks for listening — see you in two minutes!

2.5.3 Speaking: offering and comparing readings

A literary discussion is not a hunt for the one right answer. You offer a reading, support it with words from the text, and set it beside other readings — your classmates', a critic's, your own se-

cond thoughts. Use tentative language to propose an interpretation and polite language to compare it with someone else's.

Tabella 2.7 Useful language — offering and comparing readings

Function	Expressions
Offering a reading	It could be read as… · One way of reading this line is… · I take this to mean that… · What strikes me is…
Supporting it	The word … suggests… · If you look at line …, you can see that… · This is reinforced by…
Offering an alternative	Another way of seeing it is… · It might also mean… · Alternatively, …
Comparing readings	Your reading focuses on…, whereas mine… · Both readings are possible, but… · I'd go along with that up to a point.
Accepting ambiguity	Perhaps the poem deliberately leaves both open. · It doesn't have to be either/or.

1. **Pairs.** Student A reads "Death, be not proud" as a poem of firm faith; Student B reads it as a poem of fear disguised as confidence. Prepare for two minutes, then present and compare your readings using the table.
2. **Groups of three.** Is the speaker of "To His Coy Mistress" a seducer or a philosopher? Each student offers a reading supported by one quotation; the group then writes two sentences summarising the possible readings.

2.5.4 Writing: a poem built on a conceit, with a writer's note

Your task is to write a short poem (12–16 lines, free form) built on one conceit, followed by a **writer's note** of 80–100 words. The note is a short piece of critical prose about your own poem: it names the two things compared, explains how the comparison is developed, and says what effect you wanted. Read Aoife's model.

Tabella 2.8 Model text — a conceit poem and a writer's note

Tide

You are the moon, I am the restless sea:
you never touch me, yet you move me still.
From half a world away you lean on me
and twice a day I rise against my will.

When you are full, my waters climb the quay;
when you are half, I hardly leave the sand.
The fishermen look up to read the sea;
they trust the sky to tell them of the land.

They say you move away from me each year:
then pull, while there is still a pull to give —
no other light could ever lift me here,
and that I rise is how I know I live.

Writer's note
My poem compares a friendship at a distance to the moon and the tides. The friend is the moon, which never touches the sea but still moves it; the speaker is the sea, which rises in answer. Like Donne, I developed one comparison stage by stage: the daily tides, the phases of the moon, and finally a real fact — the moon moves about four centimetres further from the Earth every year — which turns the image into a fear of losing the friend. I used regular rhymes to suggest the regular rhythm of the tides. (96 words)

Structure. Stanza 1 states the conceit (moon and sea); stanza 2 develops it with new details (full and thin moon, the fishermen); stanza 3 adds a scientific fact and turns it into feeling. The note answers three questions in the present simple: *What is compared? How is it developed? What effect did I want?*

IN SINTESI

Checklist — a conceit poem and a writer's note.

- One comparison only, between two unlike things, stated in the first lines.
- Each stanza adds a new point of likeness: develop, do not repeat.
- A speaking voice: address someone (*you*), as the Metaphysicals do.
- An ending that turns the image into an idea, a paradox or a surprise.
- Writer's note (80–100 words): what is compared · how it is developed · the effect you wanted; formal register, present simple.

Task. Write your own poem (12–16 lines) and writer's note (80–100 words). Take an object from a laboratory, a sport or everyday technology — a magnet, a pendulum, a lighthouse, a relay baton, a bicycle chain — and use it as a conceit for a relationship or a feeling. **Research (TIC).**

Before you write, look up how your object works on a reliable site (the Museo Galileo in Florence and the Royal Society both have online collections of scientific instruments); note the source and check the fact you use against a second one, as Aoife did with the moon's distance.

2.6 Connections: Marino, Horace and Catullus

Donne's Italian contemporary Giambattista Marino (Naples, 1569–1625) was one of the most celebrated poets in Europe in his day. From 1615 to 1623 he lived in Paris at the court of Marie de' Medici, the mother of Henrietta Maria, and there in 1623 he printed his huge mythological poem *Adone*. In a satirical sonnet against his rival Gaspare Murtola, part of the *Murtoleide* (usually cited as *fischiata* 33), he wrote the lines that became the motto of the Italian Baroque:

> È del poeta il fin la meraviglia
> (parlo de l'eccellente e non del goffo):
> chi non sa far stupir, vada alla striglia!
>
> G. B. Marino, *Murtoleide*, sonnet "Vuo' dar una mentita per la gola", ll. 9–11 (text of Marino's *Poesie varie*, Laterza, 1913, via Wikisource)

"Wonder is the poet's aim (I mean the excellent poet, not the clumsy one): whoever cannot astonish should go and groom horses!" (translation by the editors). The sonnet is ironic — Marino pretends that Murtola astonishes readers, but only with his bad verse — yet the first line came to sum up **concettismo** (*concettismo*), the Italian taste for the *concetto*, the ingenious and surprising image. It belongs to the wider **Baroque** (*Barocco*), the European art of the seventeenth century that sought movement, emotion and amazement, from Marino's verse to Bernini's sculpture in Rome. Donne and Marino both want to surprise, but in different ways. Marino's conceits decorate: a lady's hair or a nightingale becomes the occasion for dazzling, musical variations. Donne's conceits argue: the compasses do not adorn the farewell, they prove that the lovers cannot be parted. Marino wants admiration; Donne wants agreement.

Marvell's argument has much older roots, in the Latin poets you read in class. Horace ends his ode to Leuconoe, a woman tempted to ask astrologers how long she will live, with advice instead of prophecy:

> sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi
> spem longam reseces. Dum loquimur, fugerit invida
> aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.
>
> Horace, *Odes* I.11.6–8 (text of The Latin Library)

"Be wise, strain the wine, and cut back long hope to fit a short life. While we are talking, envious time will have fled: seize the day, and trust as little as you can in tomorrow" (translation by the editors). *Carpe* literally means "pluck", as one plucks a fruit or a flower — which is exactly

what Herrick's rosebuds do in English. A generation before Horace, Catullus had made the same thought into a lover's plea:

> Vivamus mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
> rumoresque senum severiorum
> omnes unius aestimemus assis!
> soles occidere et redire possunt:
> nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
> nox est perpetua una dormienda.
>
> Catullus 5.1–6 (text of The Latin Library)

"Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love, and let us value all the gossip of stern old men at a single penny! Suns can set and rise again; for us, once our brief light has set, there is one endless night to be slept" (translation by the editors). Set the three poems side by side. All three speak to a woman under the pressure of time; all three oppose a short human life to an endless darkness — Catullus's *nox perpetua*, Marvell's "Deserts of vast eternity". Catullus goes on to count kisses by the thousand, Marvell counts centuries of praise. And Marvell answers Catullus's sun at the very end of his poem: we cannot make our sun stand still, "yet we will make him run". What Marvell adds is the logical frame — *if… but… therefore* — that turns the Latin plea into a Metaphysical proof.

COLLEGAMENTI

Geometry: why the compasses draw a circle. A circle is the set of all the points of a plane at the same distance r (the radius) from a fixed point, the centre. A pair of compasses produces exactly that: the fixed foot holds the centre, and the opening between the legs keeps the distance constant while the other foot turns. That is why Donne can write "Thy firmness makes my circle *just*": if the fixed foot slipped, the line would not be a circle and would not close on its starting point. If each leg is L long and the angle between the legs is θ, the radius is $r = 2L \sin(\theta/2)$. With legs of 12 cm, an angle of 60° gives $r = 24 \times \sin 30° = 12$ cm (legs and radius form an equilateral triangle); an angle of 90° gives $r = 24 \times \sin 45° \approx 17.0$ cm. The farther the journey, the more the fixed foot must lean — just as the poem says.

COLLEGAMENTI

Astronomy and physics: Galileo's telescope. Galileo did not invent the telescope: the instrument was first described in the Netherlands in 1608. A simple refracting telescope of his type has two lenses: a converging objective lens that forms an image of the distant object and a diverging eyepiece through which the observer looks; the magnification is roughly the focal length of the objective divided by that of the eyepiece. On 7 January 1610 Galileo saw three small "stars" beside Jupiter, and soon a fourth; by recording their positions night after night he realised that they were moons orbiting the planet. Today they are called the Galilean moons: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. Donne followed the news closely: his prose satire *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611) mentions Galileo by name.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Paraphrasing a difficult poem. Work in two stages. (1) **Sentence by sentence:** ignore the line breaks, find the full stops and the main verbs, restore normal word order, fill in words that are understood, gloss old forms (*doth*, *thou*, *then* meaning "therefore"), and rewrite each sentence in plain modern English. (2) **Stanza by stanza:** sum up each stanza in one line, then look at the sequence: where does the argument turn (*but*, *therefore*)? It is the same method you use in Latin and Greek — find the verb, then its subject and object, then the subordinate clauses, then translate — and with an Italian Baroque sonnet such as Marino's. A good paraphrase is always the first step towards a commentary.

SINTESI

- The "new philosophy" — Copernicus (1543), Kepler's *Astronomia nova* (1609), Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610) — undermined the old picture of the universe; Donne wrote in 1611 that "new Philosophy calls all in doubt".
- Religious tension (Puritans, Laud's ceremonies, a suspected Catholic minority) and private devotion shaped the poetry of the 1610s–1630s.
- Charles I (king from 1625) and the Catholic Henrietta Maria created a refined, art-loving court; from 1629 to 1640 Charles ruled without Parliament.
- Poems circulated in manuscript among friends and patrons; Donne's and Herbert's were printed in 1633, Marvell's lyrics in 1681, all after their deaths.
- "Metaphysical poetry" is a later, originally hostile label (Dryden 1693, Johnson 1779), not the name of a school.
- The metaphysical conceit joins very unlike things and develops the comparison logically; it goes with argument, dramatic openings, a speaking voice, paradox and wit.
- Donne wrote love poems (*Songs and Sonnets*), *Holy Sonnets* and the *Devotions* (1624); Herbert wrote the devotional poems of *The Temple*, including pattern poems; Marvell wrote lyrics such as "To His Coy Mistress".
- *Carpe diem* comes from Horace (*Odes* I.11); the Cavalier poets (Herrick, Carew, Lovelace, Suckling) treat it lightly, Marvell darkly.
- T1 develops the compasses conceit in iambic tetrameter; T2 argues with Death through apostrophe and paradox; T3 is built like a syllogism: *if… but… therefore*.
- *Each* / *every* + singular (✗ *every of*); *the whole* + singular countable; *few* / *little* are negative, *a few* / *a little* positive; *none of* takes a singular or plural verb; *advice*, *information*, *evidence*, *research* are uncountable.
- Marino's "È del poeta il fin la meraviglia" sums up concettismo: Marino decorates, Donne argues; Catullus 5 and Horace's *carpe diem* stand behind Marvell's plea to a woman under the pressure of time.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Which of these did Galileo report in *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610)?
   - **A.** The rings of Saturn
   - **B.** The elliptical orbit of Mars
   - **C.** Four moons moving round Jupiter
   - **D.** The Sun at the centre of the universe, for the first time

2. ● Who made “metaphysical poets” the name of a group of writers, in his *Life of Cowley* (1779)?
   A. John Dryden
   B. Izaak Walton
   C. T. S. Eliot
   D. Samuel Johnson

3. ● Which line expresses the *carpe diem* theme?
   A. “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may”
   B. “No man is an island, entire of itself”
   C. “Thy firmness makes my circle just”
   D. “And new Philosophy calls all in doubt”

4. ● Which poet spent his last years as a country priest at Bemerton, near Salisbury?
   A. John Donne
   B. George Herbert
   C. Andrew Marvell
   D. Robert Herrick

5. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a Galileo invented the telescope. b Donne’s *Poems* were published in 1633, two years after his death. c Donne, Herbert and Marvell called themselves Metaphysical poets. d Charles I ruled without Parliament from 1629 to 1640. e Marvell worked as Milton’s assistant in Cromwell’s government. f Herrick’s *Hesperides* appeared before Donne’s death.

6. ●● Match each author with a work and a date. Authors: Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Herrick, Galileo, Kepler. Works: *Astronomia nova*, *Sidereus Nuncius*, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, *The Temple*, *Hesperides*, *Miscellaneous Poems*. Dates: 1609, 1610, 1624, 1633, 1648, 1681.

7. ●●● Short answer (50–70 words). Why can the label “Metaphysical poets” be misleading? Refer to who created it, when, and what it was meant to say.

Text Analysis

8. ● T1. Answer briefly. a Who is the fixed foot of the compasses? b What does the fixed foot do when the other foot “far doth roam”? c What makes the speaker’s circle “just”? d Where does the speaker end his journey?

9. ●● T2. Name the figure of speech in each quotation and explain its effect in one sentence. a “Death be not proud” b “death, thou shalt die” c “From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be” d “Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men”

10. ●● Scansion. Copy the last two lines of T1 and write the stressed syllables in CAPITALS. How many stresses does each line have, and what is the metre?

11. ●● Paraphrase T2, lines 9–12, in plain modern English (2–3 sentences).

12. ●● T3. Name the three parts of "To His Coy Mistress", give the line numbers and the word that opens each one, and say which grammatical form dominates each part.

13. ●●● Compare the attitude to death in T2 and T3 (80–100 words). Use at least one quotation from each poem.

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation; 100–120 words): *How does Donne use the compasses to persuade the woman not to mourn?*

Language

15. ● Complete with *each*, *every*, *all* or *the whole*. a ___ of the three poets has a section in this chapter. b The fixed foot follows ___ movement of the other foot. c Galileo observed Jupiter ___ clear night for weeks. d We read T3 again, but this time ___ poem, not only the lines printed here. e Prof.ssa Rossi checked ___ the information on our blog before we posted it. f A pair of compasses has a point at the end of ___ leg.

16. ●● Complete with *few*, *a few*, *little*, *a little*, *quite a few* or *hardly any*. Use each expression once. a ___ readers in the eighteenth century admired Donne; most preferred Pope. b Galileo needed only ___ nights to understand that the "stars" were moons. c There is very ___ evidence about when the Valediction was written. d Could you give me ___ help with this paraphrase? e ___ of Marvell's lyrics were printed in his lifetime — almost none. f ___ students in our class chose a phone as their conceit: seven or eight!

17. ●● Complete with *no*, *none* or *any*. a ___ of the poets used the label "metaphysical". b "___ man is an island." c ___ student can learn this rule in ten minutes: it is really easy. d The astronomers looked for the element of fire, but there was ___. e By midnight there was ___ battery left in Marta's phone. f You can choose ___ object you like for your conceit poem.

18. ●● Choose the correct form. Where both are possible, say so. a None of Jupiter's moons (*is* / *are*) visible without a telescope. b A great deal of research (*has* / *have*) been done on Donne. c The news from Padua (*was* / *were*) soon known in England. d A large number of students (*finds* / *find*) Donne difficult. e Each of the stanzas (*develops* / *develop*) the conceit. f Every one of Herbert's poems (*is* / *are*) a kind of prayer.

19. ●● Error correction. Each sentence has one mistake (✗). Rewrite it correctly. a ✗ *Every of the Holy Sonnets has fourteen lines.* b ✗ *The professor gave us a useful advice.* c ✗ *A large number of manuscripts was copied by hand.* d ✗ *I have read the whole poems of Marvell.* e ✗ *Each students wrote a paraphrase.* f ✗ *There is few information about the date of the poem.*

20. ●● Make these uncountable nouns countable with a partitive, or correct them with a suitable quantifier. a ✗ *two informations* b ✗ *an evidence* c ✗ *many researches* d ✗ *a news* e ✗ *many advices* f ✗ *three furnitures*

21. ●● Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets, without changing the meaning. a Not many of Donne's poems were printed in his lifetime. (FEW) b All the stanzas in T1 have four lines. (EACH) c Almost none of Marvell's lyrics were known before 1681. (HARDLY) d Not one of the poets formed a school. (NONE) e I read the poem from beginning to end. (WHOLE) f Galileo had some time, not much, to observe Jupiter before the book went to print. (LITTLE)

22. ●● Build sentences from the prompts. Add words and change the verb forms where necessary. a every / line / T1 / have / eight syllables b a large number / copy / Donne's poems / make / by hand (past passive) c none of / Marvell's love poems / print / until 1681 (past passive) d a great deal of / learning / go into / every metaphysical conceit e each of / the two lovers / have / a role / in the conceit

23. ●●● Translate into English. a Ogni studente ha ricevuto qualche consiglio dalla professoressa. b Pochi lettori capirono il concetto, ma alcuni lo trovarono geniale. c Nessuna delle informazioni che abbiamo trovato è affidabile.

Vocabulary

24. ● Complete with words from the vocabulary table: *grace*, *orbit*, *persuade*, *prove*, *soul*, *sphere*, *telescope*. a The speaker of T3 tries to ___ the woman to love him now. b Galileo's ___ showed four moons in ___ round Jupiter. c Donne says that the lovers' two souls are really one ___. d The old cosmology placed the Moon in a crystal ___. e Herbert asks for God's ___, a gift he knows he cannot earn. f In T2 Donne sets out to ___ that Death is weak.

25. ●● Complete with a word ending in *-ward* or *-wards* formed from the word in brackets. a The lark flies ___. (UP) b After the conference she began the long ___ journey. (HOME) c Herbert's eyes are turned ___. (HEAVEN) d He gave a ___ glance at the house as he left. (BACK) e We read the poem first and discussed it ___. (AFTER) f The *Holy Sonnets* look ___, into the poet's own soul. (IN)

26. ●● Match the verbs (1–6) with the nouns (a–f) to make collocations, then use three of them in sentences about this chapter. 1 prove 2 draw 3 seize 4 make 5 offer 6 raise — a the day b a reading c an objection d a point e a conclusion f a comparison

Writing and Speaking

27. ●●● Writing. Write a poem of 12–16 lines built on one conceit, and a writer's note of 80–100 words that explains what you compared, how you developed the comparison and what effect you wanted. Follow the checklist in the Skills section.

28. ●● Speaking. "Is 'Death, be not proud' a poem of faith or a poem of fear?" Prepare a reading of two minutes supported by two quotations, then respond to a classmate who holds the opposite view, using the expressions for comparing readings.

Towards B2

29. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the best word (A, B, C or D) for each gap. *In his lifetime John Donne was (1) ___ known as a preacher than as a poet. His poems (2) ___ in manuscript among his friends, and very (3) ___ of them were printed before his death. Today, however, he is (4) ___ as one of the greatest poets in the language. His images (5) ___ readers with their boldness, and few poets have (6) ___ so much use of the science of their time.* 1 A more B most C much D better · 2 A moved B circulated C passed D ran · 3 A few B little C a few D any · 4 A regarded B thought C believed D estimated · 5 A strike B hit C knock D beat · 6 A done B made C taken D had

30. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap. *In 1610 Galileo published a short book (1) ___ which he described what he had seen through his telescope. He showed (2) ___ the Moon has mountains and valleys. (3) ___ of his discoveries was a blow to the old picture of the universe. Not (4) ___ scholar accepted his ideas at once, and in 1633 he was forced (5) ___ abjure them. But by then very (6) ___ educated Europeans had not heard of him.*

31. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. *Donne's secret (1) ___ (MARRY) to Anne More had (2) ___ (DISASTER) consequences for his career. Years later he wrote powerful (3) ___ (RELIGION) poems and became a famous (4) ___ (PREACH). His (5) ___ (ARGUE) style and his (6) ___ (SURPRISE) comparisons still fascinate readers.*

32. ●●● Key-word transformations. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals and two to five words. a Almost none of Herbert's poems were known before 1633. HARDLY → ___ of Herbert's poems were known before 1633. b Every one of the stanzas ends with a rhyme. EACH → ___ ends with a rhyme. c Galileo did not have much time to publish his results. LITTLE → Galileo had ___ to publish his results. d Not one of the poets used the label. NONE → ___ used the label. e There was only a small number of printed copies. FEW → There were ___ printed copies. f I spent all evening reading Donne. WHOLE → I spent ___ reading Donne.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. B: Donne, Herbert, Marvell and the Cavalier poets, with complete texts and notes.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: "metaphysical poets", "conceit", "carpe diem", "paradox".
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on early seventeenth-century poetry.
- [MOR] K. O. Morgan (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain*: the early Stuarts and the reign of Charles I.
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: *each* and *every*; *all* and *whole*; *few* and *little*; *no* and *none*; uncountable nouns.

Glossario del capitolo

Apostrophe
apostrofe — a figure of speech in which the speaker addresses an absent person, an abstraction or a thing as if it could hear.

Baroque
Barocco — the European art and culture of the seventeenth century, which sought movement, emotion and wonder.

Carpe diem
cogli l'attimo — "seize the day" (Horace): the theme that we must enjoy the present because time is short.

Cavalier poets
poeti cavalieri — royalist poets of the reign of Charles I (Herrick, Carew, Lovelace, Suckling) who wrote elegant, musical lyrics.

Concettismo
concettismo — the Italian Baroque taste for the ingenious and surprising image (*concetto*), summed up by Marino.

Determiner
determinante — a word before a noun that says which thing or how much: *the, this, my, each, some*.

Devotion
devozione — private religious practice: prayer, self-examination, meditation on death.

Iambic tetrameter
tetrametro giambico — a line of four iambic feet (eight syllables), as in Donne's Valediction.

Metaphysical conceit
concetto metafisico — a comparison between very unlike things, developed logically through a passage or a whole poem.

Metaphysical poetry
poesia metafisica — the learned, argumentative poetry of Donne and his followers; a later label given by critics.

New philosophy
la nuova filosofia — the new natural science of the early seventeenth century (Kepler, Galileo).

Paradox
paradosso — a statement that seems to contradict itself but contains a truth: "Death, thou shalt die".

Partitive
partitivo — an expression that names a unit of an uncountable noun: *a piece of advice*.

Pattern poem
carme figurato — a poem whose printed shape imitates its subject, like Herbert's "Easter Wings".

Quantifier
quantificatore — a determiner that expresses quantity: *all, most, few, a little, no*.

Syllogism
sillogismo — a logical argument with two premises and a conclusion.

Valediction
commiato — a poem or speech of farewell.

Soluzioni

1. C.

2. D. Dryden (1693) had said that Donne "affects the metaphysics"; Johnson turned it into a name.

3. A (Herrick, "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time").

4. B.

5. a F — the telescope was first described in the Netherlands in 1608; Galileo improved it. b T. c F — the label was given later by critics (Dryden, Johnson). d T. e T. f F — *Hesperides* appeared in 1648; Donne died in 1631.

6. Donne — *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* — 1624; Herbert — *The Temple* — 1633; Marvell — *Miscellaneous Poems* — 1681; Herrick — *Hesperides* — 1648; Galileo — *Sidereus Nuncius* — 1610; Kepler — *Astronomia nova* — 1609.

7. *Traccia:* The poets never used the name and did not form a school or a movement. The label came from critics after their deaths: Dryden in 1693 said Donne "affects the metaphysics", and Johnson in 1779 named them "metaphysical poets", partly as a criticism of their learned, far-fetched comparisons. It describes a style — argument, wit, daring conceits — not poems mainly about metaphysics. (61 words)

8. a The woman's soul ("Thy soul, the fix'd foot"). b It leans and "hearkens after" the other foot. c Her firmness: the fixed foot holds the centre. d Where he began — at home, with her.

9. a Apostrophe (and personification): Death is spoken to as a person, which makes it seem smaller and answerable. b Paradox: Death itself will "die", because after the resurrection there will be no more death. c Metaphor/comparison: rest and sleep are only "pictures" (images) of death, so death must be even more pleasant. d Personification and a contemptuous list: Death is a servant of other forces, not a master, which humiliates it.

10. thy FIRM-ness MAKES my CIR-cle JUST / and MAKES me END where I be-GUN. Four stresses in each line: iambic tetrameter.

11. *Model:* You are a slave to fate, to chance, to kings and to desperate people, and you live together with poison, war and illness. Opium or magic spells can make us sleep just as well as you can, and better than your blow. So why are you so proud?

12. Part 1, ll. 1–20, opens with "Had" (*Had we but world enough*): an unreal conditional (*Had we… were… would*). Part 2, ll. 21–32, opens with "But": future forms of certainty (*shall be found, shall sound, shall try*). Part 3, ll. 33–46, opens with "Now therefore": exhortations and imperatives (*let us…*, *we will make*).

13. *Traccia:* Both poems face death with argument, but their conclusions are opposite. In T2 death is defeated: it is only "One short sleep", after which "we wake eternally", so the tone is triumphant (though some readers hear anxiety behind the confidence). In T3 death is final and physical: "Deserts of vast eternity", worms and dust; nothing is promised afterwards, so the only answer is to love now. T2 is more hopeful because it rests on faith in resurrection; T3 rests only on the present. (about 90 words)

14. *Model:* **P** Donne turns the farewell into a proof that the lovers cannot really be separated. **E** He compares them to "stiff twin compasses": she is "the fix'd foot", he the foot that must "obliquely run", and her "firmness makes my circle just / And makes me end where I begun." **E** Because the two legs are joined at the hinge, distance only opens the angle between them; it cannot break them apart. The circle, an ancient symbol of perfection, closes where it began, so his journey is already a return. Tears would therefore be illogical: the geometry of their love guarantees reunion. (about 105 words)

15. a Each (singular verb *has*) b every (*each* also possible) c every (*each* also possible) d the whole e all (*whole* is not used with uncountable nouns) f each (only two legs).

16. a Few b a few c little d a little e Hardly any f Quite a few. (In a and e, *Few* and *Hardly any* both make sense; "almost none" in e points to *Hardly any*.)

17. a None b No c Any d none e no f any.

18. a both possible: *is* (formal) / *are* (informal). b has c was d find e develops f is.

19. a Every one of / Each of the Holy Sonnets has fourteen lines. b The professor gave us some useful advice / a useful piece of advice. c A large number of manuscripts were copied by hand. d I have read all (of) Marvell's poems. e Each student wrote a paraphrase. f There is little information about the date of the poem.

20. a two pieces (items) of information b a piece of evidence c a lot of / a great deal of research d a piece of news e a lot of advice / several pieces of advice f three pieces of furniture.

21. a Few of Donne's poems were printed in his lifetime. b Each stanza (Each of the stanzas) in T1 has four lines. c Hardly any of Marvell's lyrics were known before 1681. d None of the poets formed a school. e I read the whole poem. f Galileo had a little time to observe Jupiter before the book went to print.

22. a Every line of T1 has eight syllables. b A large number of copies of Donne's poems were made by hand. c None of Marvell's love poems was (were) printed until 1681. d A great deal of learning goes into every metaphysical conceit. e Each of the two lovers has a role in the conceit.

23. a Every student received some advice (a piece of advice / some pieces of advice) from the teacher. b Few readers understood the conceit, but a few found it brilliant. c None of the information (that) we found is reliable.

24. a persuade b telescope; orbit c soul d sphere e grace f prove.

25. a upwards b homeward c heavenwards (heavenward) d backward e afterwards f inwards.

26. 1 d (prove a point) · 2 e (draw a conclusion) · 3 a (seize the day) · 4 f (make a comparison) · 5 b (offer a reading) · 6 c (raise an objection). (*Draw a comparison* and *make a point* are also good collocations, but each noun is used once.) Example sentences: *Marvell draws a dark conclusion from the shortness of life. Donne makes a comparison between lovers and compasses. Horace tells Leuconoe to seize the day.*

27. *Assessment guidance:* one conceit between unlike things, stated early and developed with a new detail in each stanza (4 points); a speaking voice and an ending that turns image into idea (2); writer's note of 80–100 words naming what is compared, how it is developed and the intended effect, in a formal register (3); accuracy of language (1). Total 10.

28. *Model answer (faith):* "I take this as a poem of faith. What strikes me is the ending: 'One short sleep past, we wake eternally' — the speaker is sure of the resurrection, so death is only a sleep." *Response (fear):* "I'd go along with that up to a point, but another way of seeing it is that he protests too much. Why insult Death — 'poor death', 'slave' — unless you are afraid of it? Perhaps the poem deliberately leaves both open."

29. 1 D (*better known*) 2 B 3 A 4 A (*regarded as*) 5 A 6 B (*make use of*).

30. 1 in 2 that 3 Each (One) 4 every 5 to 6 few.

31. 1 marriage 2 disastrous 3 religious 4 preacher 5 argumentative 6 surprising.

32. a Hardly any b Each of the stanzas (Each stanza) c (very) little time d None of the poets e only a few f the whole evening.