CAPITOLO

2

Wit and Devotion: the Metaphysical Poets

"And new Philosophy calls all in doubt" — John Donne, An Anatomy of the World (1611)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can explain how the new astronomy of Kepler and Galileo, 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.
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 Stuart Court 2
2.2 Literature: the Metaphysical Poets 5
2.3 Texts: Compasses, Death and Time 9
2.4 Language: Determiners and Quantifiers 15
2.5 Skills: Interpreting a Poem, Writing a Conceit 18
2.6 Connections: Marino and the Baroque 23

English 4 · Parte I · Crown and Conscience · versione 1.0
Capitolo 2: Wit and Devotion: the Metaphysical Poets · pagine 53–82 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

In 1610 an Italian professor of mathematics pointed a home-made telescope at the night sky and saw what no one had seen before: mountains on the Moon, thousands of new stars and four small “stars” moving round Jupiter. A year later an English 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**. They wrote about love, God and death, but they argued like lawyers, borrowed their images from maps, compasses and astronomy, and wanted above all to surprise the reader.

You will read three of the most famous poems in English, learn why a hostile critic gave these poets the name they still carry, and see how an Italian contemporary, Giambattista Marino, built a whole poetics on the same love of surprise. In the language section you will work on determiners and quantifiers — *each*, *every*, *few*, *a little*, *none* — and in the skills section you will write a poem of your own built on one daring comparison.

2.1 History and Society: the New Philosophy and the Stuart Court

The seventeenth century opened with a crisis of certainty. The old picture of the universe, inherited from Aristotle and Ptolemy, had placed a motionless Earth at the centre of a series of crystal spheres that carried the Moon, the Sun, the planets and the fixed stars. Below the Moon everything changed and decayed; above it everything was perfect and eternal. That picture, which you met in English 3 (chapter 13) when Copernicus put the Sun at the centre in 1543, was now being dismantled piece by piece. Figura 2.1 places the scientists and the poets of this chapter on the same time line.

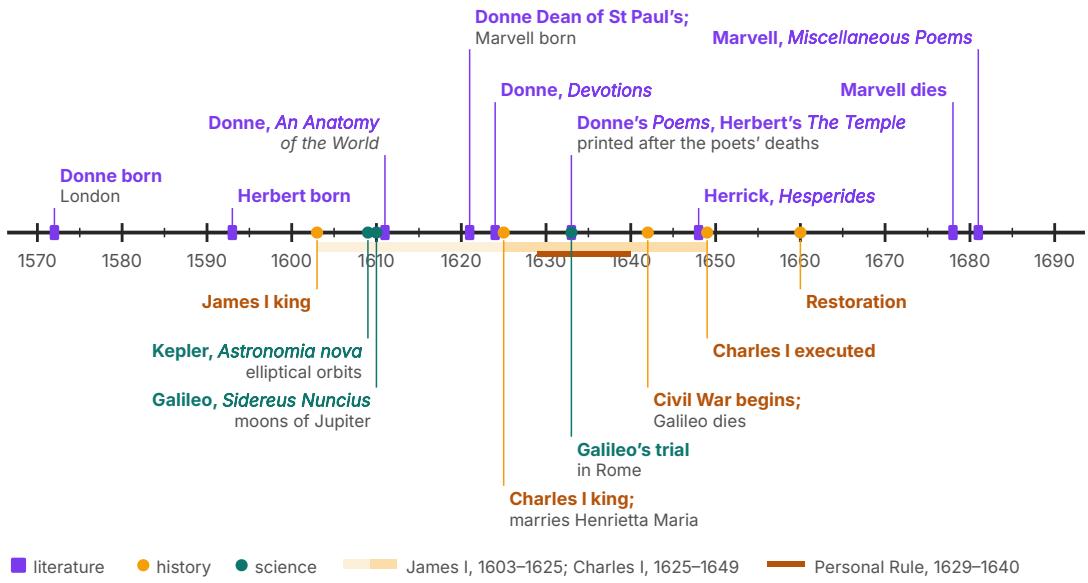


Figura 2.1 The age of the Metaphysical poets on a proportional time axis, 1570–1690: literary events above the axis (violet), historical events (amber) and scientific ones (teal) below. Donne, Herbert and Marvell lived through the new astronomy, the reign of Charles I and the Civil War; most of their poems were printed only after their deaths.

2.1.1 A new sky: Kepler and Galileo

In 1609 the German astronomer Johannes Kepler published *Astronomia nova* ("The New Astronomy"), which showed that Mars moves not in a perfect circle but in an ellipse. In March 1610 Galileo Galilei, then teaching at the University of Padua, published in Venice a short Latin book, *Sidereus Nuncius* ("The Starry Messenger"). With a telescope he had improved himself, he had seen that the Moon has mountains and valleys like the Earth, that the Milky Way is made of countless stars, and that four moons travel round Jupiter. He named them the "Medicean stars" in honour of Cosimo II de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who soon made him his court mathematician.

Each of these discoveries attacked the old order. If the Moon was rough and imperfect, the heavens were not made of a different, perfect substance. If Jupiter had moons of its own, the Earth was not the only centre of motion. The **new philosophy** (*la nuova filosofia*) — what we now call the new science — was not yet proved for everybody: many learned people still defended the old system, and in 1633 Galileo was tried in Rome and forced to abjure his defence of Copernicus. But educated readers all over Europe now knew that the universe described in their schoolbooks might be wrong.

2.1.2 “All in pieces”: a world in doubt

In 1611 John Donne wrote a long poem in memory of the young daughter of his patron, Sir Robert Drury. Its title is *An Anatomy of the World*, and in a famous passage it describes the new science as a kind of earthquake:

> 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)

The “element of fire” was a sphere of fire that the old cosmology placed just below the Moon; now nobody could find it. Donne is not simply reporting a scientific debate. He uses it as an image of a world without *coherence*, where kings, subjects, fathers and sons no longer know their place. Many readers in the 1610s and 1620s shared this sense that old certainties — in the sky, in the Church, in society — were breaking up.

2.1.3 Religious anxiety and devotion

Religion was the other great source of anxiety. As you saw in chapter 1, the Church of England contained both Puritans, who wanted plain worship and stressed predestination, and people who loved ceremony, music and beautiful churches. Catholics were a persecuted minority. Donne himself was born in 1572 into a Catholic family related to Sir Thomas More; his brother Henry died in prison in 1593 after a Catholic priest was found in his room. Donne later joined the Church of England, but his poems never lose the feeling of a man who has had to choose his faith and is not sure he is saved.

In the 1620s and 1630s the arguments grew sharper. Under Charles I, William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633, imposed ceremony and order on the Church; Puritans saw this as a return towards Rome. At the same time personal **devotion** (*devozione*) — private prayer, self-examination, meditation on death — was practised with great intensity on both sides. Religious poetry, from Donne’s *Holy Sonnets* to Herbert’s *The Temple*, grew out of this habit of examining one’s own soul.

2.1.4 The court of Charles I and Henrietta Maria

Charles I became king in 1625 and in the same year married Henrietta Maria, the Catholic daughter of King Henri IV of France and of the Florentine Marie de’ Medici. Their court was elegant and cosmopolitan. Charles was one of the greatest art collectors in Europe: the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck became his principal painter in 1632, and Rubens painted the ceiling of the Banqueting House in Whitehall, installed in 1636. The masques that you studied in En-

glish 3 (chapter 14) became even more lavish. From 1629 to 1640 Charles ruled without calling Parliament — the period known as the Personal Rule — and the tensions of these years led to the Civil War of 1642, the subject of chapter 3.

2.1.5 Poems in manuscript

As at the Tudor court (English 3, chapter 9), poetry was still mainly a private art. Donne showed his poems to friends and patrons, and they were copied by hand in manuscript collections; very few were printed in his lifetime. His *Poems* appeared in 1633, two years after his death, and George Herbert's *The Temple* in the same year, a few months after his. Most of Andrew Marvell's lyrics were printed only in 1681, three years after his death. So the "Metaphysical poets" were known to most readers only after they had died — another reason why their reputation has gone up and down so much.

2.2 Literature: the Metaphysical Poets

2.2.1 A name given by a critic

Metaphysical poetry (*poesia metafisica*) is the name given to the intellectual, argumentative poetry written by Donne and by poets who wrote in a similar way in the first half of the seventeenth century: Herbert, Marvell, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley. The poets never used the label themselves, and they did not form a school or a movement. In 1693 John Dryden complained that Donne "affects the metaphysics" — that is, he fills even his love poems with philosophy. In 1779, in his *Life of Cowley*, Samuel Johnson turned the remark into a name: "About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets." Johnson's judgement was largely negative: in their poems, he wrote, "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together". The label stuck, and in the twentieth century readers who loved these poets kept it, as a compliment.

> **ERRORE FREQUENTE**
>
> ✗ *I poeti metafisici fondarono una scuola e si chiamavano così.*
>
> ✓ *Metaphysical* è un'etichetta posteriore, data da critici (Dryden, poi Johnson nel 1779) in senso in parte negativo. I poeti non formarono un movimento: li accomuna uno stile, non un programma. E *metaphysical* non vuol dire che queste poesie trattino soprattutto di metafisica: indica uno stile ragionatore, dotto, pieno di filosofia e di scienza anche quando parla d'amore.

2.2.2 The metaphysical conceit

In English 3 (chapter 9) you met the *conceit*, the elaborate comparison of Petrarchan poetry: the lady as a deer, love as a ship in a storm. The Metaphysical poets pushed it much further. A **me-**

taphysical conceit (*concetto metafisico*) joins two things that seem to have nothing in common — two lovers and a pair of compasses, a soul and a drop of dew, a bed and the whole world — and then develops the comparison logically, point by point, for several lines or a whole poem, until the strange likeness seems inevitable. The images often come from science, geography, law, trade or theology rather than from nature: maps, globes, alchemy, coins. The pleasure is intellectual: the reader is first shocked, then convinced.

2.2.3 Argument, drama and speech

Three other features go with the conceit. First, the poems are **arguments**: they try to persuade someone — a woman, God, Death — and they move with *if*, *but*, *therefore*, like a lawyer's speech. Secondly, they often have **dramatic openings** that throw the reader into the middle of a situation: "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love" ("The Canonization"), "Busy old fool, unruly sun" ("The Sun Rising"). Thirdly, the rhythm follows the **speaking voice**, with questions, exclamations and broken lines, instead of the smooth music of Elizabethan lyric. They love the **paradox** (*paradosso*), a statement that seems contradictory but contains a truth: "Death, thou shalt die." All this is what their age called *wit* (English 3, chapter 12): quickness of mind and the ability to see unexpected connections.

IN SINTESI

- **Conceit:** a surprising comparison from science, law, trade or theology, developed logically.
- **Argument:** the poem persuades; logical connectors (*if… but… therefore*), the syllogism.
- **Drama:** an abrupt opening, a speaker addressing someone, a situation.
- **Voice:** colloquial speech, irregular rhythm, questions and exclamations.
- **Wit and paradox:** intelligence as pleasure; learning used to surprise.
- **Themes:** love (body and soul), God and salvation, death and time.

2.2.4 John Donne (1572–1631)

Donne's life explains the two sides 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 on the expeditions to Cadiz (1596) and the Azores (1597), and became secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, one of the most powerful men in England. In 1601 he secretly married Anne More, the seventeen-year-old niece of Egerton's wife; he lost his job, was briefly imprisoned, and spent years in poverty with a growing family. These are the years of most of the love poems later collected (from 1635) under the title *Songs and Sonnets*: witty, sensual, sometimes cynical, sometimes deeply tender. Anne died in 1617, after giving birth to their twelfth child.

In 1615, after long hesitation, Donne was ordained a priest of the Church of England, and in 1621 he became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London, the most famous preacher of his day.

His religious poems, especially the nineteen *Holy Sonnets* (probably mostly written around 1609–1611, though the dates are debated), speak to God with the same passion and the same arguments that the earlier poems addressed to women. In 1623, during a serious illness, he wrote the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (published in 1624), meditations on his sickness. One of them contains his most quoted sentence: "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; his marble monument, which shows him wrapped in his shroud, survived the Great Fire of 1666 (chapter 4) and can still be seen in St Paul's.

2.2.5 George Herbert (1593–1633)

George Herbert came from a noble family, was Public Orator of the University of Cambridge and seemed destined for a career at court. Instead he became a country priest, and from 1630 until his death in 1633 he was rector of Bemerton, a small parish near Salisbury. His poems, collected in *The Temple* (1633), are a record of the soul's quarrels and reconciliations with God, written in a simple, conversational language. According to his first biographer, Izaak Walton, Herbert sent the manuscript from his deathbed to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, to be printed or burnt as Ferrar thought best.

Herbert experimented constantly 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 "Easter Wings" in the shape of two pairs of wings (Figura 2.2). In each stanza the lines grow shorter as the poet describes the Fall of man and his own sickness — "Most poore", "Most thinne" — and then longer again as he rises "with thee", like a lark, towards God. The idea is very old (Greek poets of the Hellenistic age wrote shaped poems), but Herbert makes the shape part of the meaning.

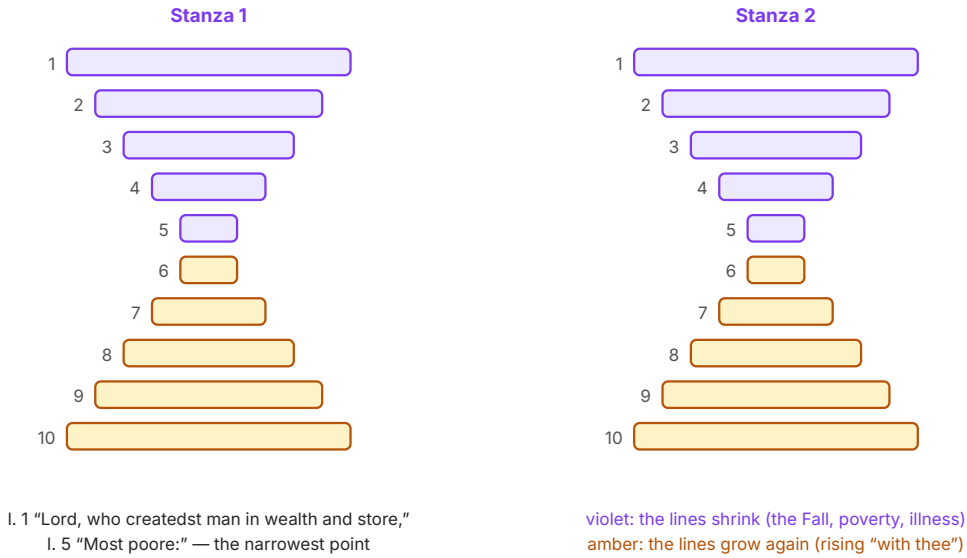


Figura 2.2 The shape of George Herbert’s “Easter Wings” (*The Temple*, 1633), drawn schematically: in each stanza of ten lines the lines shrink to two syllables and then grow again, so that the stanza looks like a pair of wings. Printed sideways in the 1633 edition, each stanza fills a page.

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. He worked as tutor to the daughter of the Parliamentary general Thomas Fairfax, and in 1657 became assistant to John Milton, the Latin Secretary of Cromwell’s government (chapter 3). From 1659 until his death he was Member of Parliament for Hull. In his lifetime he was known as a politician and a writer of satires; most of his lyric poems — “The Garden”, “The Definition of Love”, “To His Coy Mistress” — were printed only in 1681, in *Miscellaneous Poems*, published by a woman who presented herself as his widow. (His political poems on Cromwell, such as “An Horatian Ode”, were cut from almost every copy and became widely known only in the eighteenth century.) Marvell combines Donne’s argumentative wit with a classical balance and a cooler, ironic voice.

2.2.7 Carpe diem and the Cavalier poets

“To His Coy Mistress” belongs to one of the oldest traditions of love poetry: **carpe diem** (*cogli l’attimo*), from a line of the Roman poet Horace (*Odes* I.11): “seize the day”, enjoy the present because time and death are coming. In seventeenth-century England the theme is typical of the

Cavalier poets (*poeti cavalieri*): Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace and Sir John Suckling, royalist gentlemen (the "Cavaliers" of the Civil War) who wrote elegant, musical, often light lyrics in the tradition of Ben Jonson (chapter 1). The most famous example is the first stanza of Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time", from *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 (text of *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, 1900)

Compare Herrick's smooth rhythm and simple image (the rose) with Marvell's argument and his shocking images of the grave: the theme is the same, but the Cavalier sings while the Metaphysical argues.

2.3 Texts: Compasses, Death and Time

The three texts below show the Metaphysical style in three moods: a tender farewell, a challenge to Death, and a seduction built like a logical proof. Read each one aloud first: these poems were written to sound like a voice.

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

A **valediction** (*commiato*) is a farewell. The speaker is leaving on a journey and tells the woman he loves not to cry: their love is spiritual, so distance cannot break it. According to Izaak Walton, Donne wrote the poem for his wife before a journey to France in 1611, but this is Walton's story, not a documented fact. In stanzas 1–6 the speaker says that their parting should be as quiet as the death of a good man, and that their two souls, being "one", will not break but expand, "Like gold to aery thinness beat". Then comes the conceit of the compasses.

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

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*), with two legs or "feet" joined at the top · *fix'd foot*: the leg that stays at the centre · *doth*: does · *hearkens after*: listens for, bends towards · *erect*: upright · *obliquely*: at a slant, not in a straight line · *just*: exact, perfect · *begun*: began (an old past form).

Analysis

Form. The poem has nine quatrains of **iambic tetrameter** (*tetrametro giambico*: four iambic feet, eight syllables) rhyming *abab*: a simple, regular frame for a very complex thought. The calm rhythm suits the speaker's argument that a true love does not need tears.

The conceit. The two lovers are the two legs of one pair of compasses (Figura 2.3). The woman is the fixed foot at the centre; the speaker is the foot that travels round. They are "two", but joined at the top, so they can never be separated. When he moves far away, she "leans" towards him; when he comes home, she "grows erect". Her firmness keeps the circle perfect and brings him back to the point where he started. Notice how Donne builds the comparison like a geometrical proof: each stanza adds one property of the instrument and gives it a meaning.

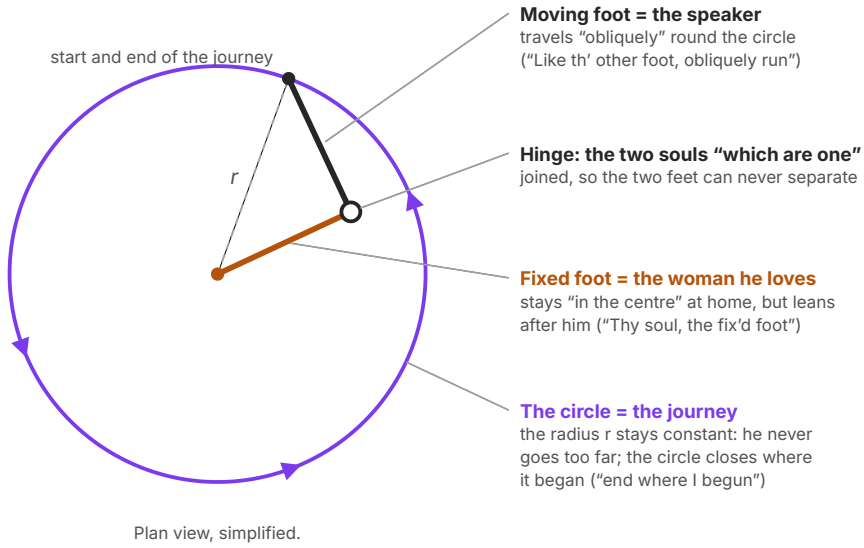


Figura 2.3 The compasses conceit of T1 mapped onto the instrument (simplified). The fixed foot at the centre is the woman who stays at home; the moving foot is the speaker who travels; the hinge makes the two souls one; the circle, which closes on its starting point, is the journey and the return.

Language and themes. The vocabulary is technical and plain — *centre*, *foot*, *circle*, *obliquely* — and the voice is intimate (*thy*, *thou*). The circle was also an ancient symbol of perfection and eternity, so the last line suggests that their love is complete. Some readers have noticed a possible sexual double meaning in "grows erect": Donne's wit often joins body and soul in the same image.

1. What is the speaker going to do, and what does he ask the woman not to do?
2. Which lover is the fixed foot, and which is the moving foot? Find the words that tell you.
3. What happens to the fixed foot when the other "far doth roam"? What does this say about the woman's feelings?
4. Why is the circle a good image for the end of a journey? Think of both geometry and meaning.
5. Samuel Johnson wondered "whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim" in this comparison. What do you think?

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

One of the nineteen *Holy Sonnets*. It is number X in the order of the 1635 edition, which most modern editions follow (in the first edition of 1633 it was number VI). The speaker speaks directly to Death as if it were a person — a figure of speech called **apostrophe** (*apostrofe*) — and proves, point by point, that Death has no reason to be proud.

Tabella 2.2 T2 — Donne, Holy Sonnet X, complete. Text of *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (ed. A. Quiller-Couch, 1900), no. 202, where the poem is titled “Death”; spelling modernised by the editor.

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 picture 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’rt 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*: the accent shows that *-ed* is pronounced as a separate syllable · *overthrow*: defeat, destroy · *which but thy picture be*: which are only your image · *then*: therefore, so (in older English *then* can also mean “than”, but not here) · *soonest*: most readily · *delivery*: liberation · *poppy*: opium, a drug that makes you sleep · *charms*: magic spells · *stroke*: blow · *swell’st*: are you proud (literally “do you swell”).

Analysis

Form. The sonnet combines the Petrarchan octave (*abbaabba*) with a sestet that ends in an English couplet (*cddcee*). The volta comes at line 9, where the tone changes from argument to insult: “Thou’rt slave…”. The final couplet, slightly indented, gives the conclusion.

The argument. Donne reasons like a debater. (1) The people you think you kill do not really die. (2) Rest and sleep, which are only pictures of you, give us pleasure; so you, the original, must give more — and good men go with you willingly. (3) You are not powerful: you are the servant of fate, chance, kings and desperate men, and drugs give sleep better than you do. (4) Conclusion: after one short sleep we wake for ever, and death itself will end. The last line is a perfect paradox: "Death, thou shalt die!"

Language. The poem is full of monosyllables and strong stresses ("Die not, poor Death"), and the caesuras break the lines like the pauses of a voice. The Christian belief in resurrection is the hidden premise of the whole argument.

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 5–6.
3. Who or what is Death a "slave" to (line 9)? Why is this humiliating?
4. Find two paradoxes in the poem.
5. Is the speaker really as confident as he sounds? Give reasons for your answer.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Paraphrasing a difficult line: T2, ll. 5–6.

1. **Find the subject and the verb.** The main verb is *must flow*; the subject is *much more [pleasure]*.
2. **Restore the normal word order.** "Much pleasure [flows] from Rest and Sleep, which are only your picture; then much more [pleasure] must flow from you."
3. **Gloss the old words.** *be* = are; *then* = "therefore", "so" (not "than": the line draws a conclusion from the comparison between the picture and the original).
4. **Paraphrase.** "Rest and sleep are only images of you, and they give us a lot of pleasure; so you, the real thing, must give us even more."
5. **Comment.** The argument is a mock-logical step from the copy to the original: it is witty, but it also expresses a real faith that death is a sleep before waking.

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

A man speaks to a woman who refuses him. The poem is built like a **syllogism** (*sillogismo*), a logical argument in three steps: two premises and a conclusion (Figura 2.4). Part 1 (ll. 1–20): *if* we had infinite time, your coyness would be no crime, and I would praise you for centuries. Part 2 (ll. 21–32): *but* time is short and death is coming. Part 3 (ll. 33–46): *therefore* let us love now.

Tabella 2.3 T3 — Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress", ll. 1–4 and 21–32. Text of *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (1900), no. 357; spelling modernised by the editor; the poem was first printed 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 preserved 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, unwilling to show love · *mistress*: here, the woman he loves (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, fastidious (an old meaning).

Analysis

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

The argument. In part 1 the speaker pretends to accept the woman's slowness, with comic hyperbole: he would love her "ten years before the Flood" and spend "an hundred years" praising her eyes. In part 2 the tone changes completely with *But*: Time is a chariot behind him, and eternity is a desert in front. The images are of silence and decay — the marble tomb, the

worms, dust and ashes. The final couplet of the passage is a cold, ironic understatement: the grave is "fine and private", but nobody makes love there.

Themes. This is *carpe diem*, but much darker than Herrick's roses. Readers disagree about the speaker: is he a clever seducer using philosophy as a trick, or a man genuinely frightened by time and death? The poem allows both readings.

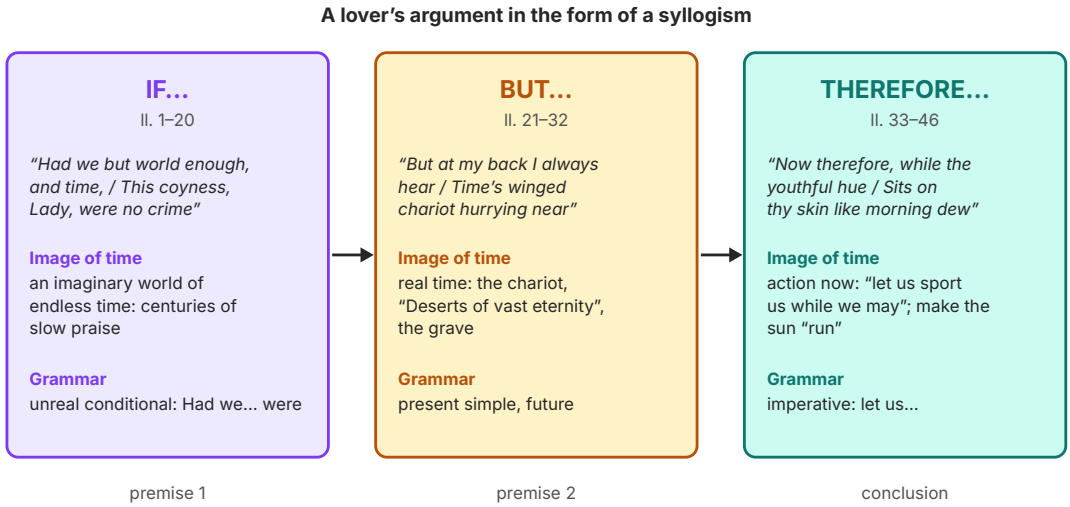


Figura 2.4 The three-part argument of "To His Coy Mistress" as a syllogism: a hypothetical world of infinite time (*Had we...*), the reality of time and death (*But...*), and the conclusion (*Now therefore...*). Each part has its own image of time and its own grammar.

1. What does the woman do, or not do, that makes the speaker write the poem?
2. Find the word that marks the beginning of part 2. How does the tone change?
3. Explain the two images of time in ll. 21–24.
4. Which images in ll. 25–30 describe death? Which senses do they involve?
5. Explain the irony of ll. 31–32.
6. Compare the attitude to death in T2 and T3. Which poem is more optimistic?

2.4 Language: Determiners and Quantifiers

A **determiner** (*determinante*) is a word that comes before a noun and tells us which thing or how much of it: *the*, *this*, *my*, *each*, *some*. A **quantifier** (*quantificatore*) is a determiner that expresses quantity: *few*, *a little*, *many*, *no*, *all*. You have used many of them since English 1; at B2 the difficulty is choosing between similar forms and matching them with countable and uncountable nouns. Figura 2.5 puts the main quantifiers on a scale.

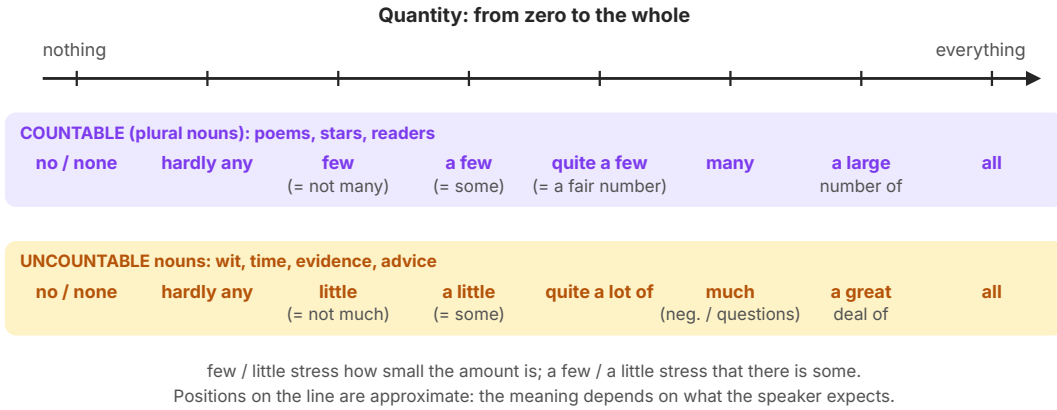


Figura 2.5 Quantifiers on a scale from zero to everything, with plural countable nouns (violet) and uncountable nouns (amber). The positions are approximate.

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

Tabella 2.4 *Each*, *every*, *all*, *whole*: forms and uses

Form	Use	Example
each + singular noun	two or more, seen one by one	*Each* stanza adds a new property of the compasses.
each of + the / these / my… + plural	singular verb in careful writing	*Each of* the four moons *has* its own orbit.
every + singular noun	three or more, seen as a group: "all, without exception"	*Every* line of the poem is in iambic tetrameter.
every one of + plural	✗ *every of*	*Every one of* the Holy Sonnets has fourteen lines.
all (of) the + plural / uncountable	the total amount	*All the* poems / *all the* time
the whole + singular countable	= complete, every part of it	*the whole* poem = *all the* poem (less common)

With two things only, use *each*, not *every*: *The compasses have a foot on each side* (✗ *on every side*). *Whole* is not normally used with uncountable nouns: *all the money* (✗ *the whole money*), *all the evidence*. With time expressions both are possible: *all day* = *the whole day*.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Each / every / whole. Italiano: *ogni* traduce sia *each* sia *every*. Usa *each* quando pensi agli elementi uno per uno (anche solo due: *each hand*, "ciascuna mano"), *every* quando pensi a un gruppo di almeno tre, "tutti senza eccezione". Entrambi vogliono il **singolare**: *every student knows* (non ✗ *every students*). *Each* può essere pronome (*each of them*, "ciascuno di loro"); *every* no: si dice *every one of them*. *Tutto il / tutta la* + singolare numerabile = *the whole* (*tutta la poesia* = *the whole poem*); con i non numerabili si usa *all the* (*tutto il denaro* = *all the money*).

2.4.2 *Few*, *a few*, *little*, *a little* and other quantities

Few and *a few* go with plural countable nouns; *little* and *a little* with uncountable nouns. The article changes the point of view: *few* and *little* are negative ("not many / not much, less than we expected"), *a few* and *a little* are positive ("some, a small but useful amount"). Compare: *Few of Donne's poems were printed in his lifetime* (= almost none) and *A few of his poems were set to music* (= some were). In British English *quite a few* means "a fairly large number": *Quite a few readers found Donne difficult*. *Only a few* and *very little* are common: *Only a few copies survive*; *There is very little evidence for the date*.

For large amounts in formal writing, use *a great deal of* or *a large amount of* with uncountable nouns, and *a large number of* with plural countable nouns, followed by a plural verb: *Herbert's poems show a great deal of formal invention*; *A large number of poems were copied by hand*. *Hardly any* means "almost no": *Hardly any of Marvell's lyrics were known before 1681*.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Few / a few, little / a little. *Few* = "pochi" (e sottolinea che sono *troppo* pochi); *a few* = "alcuni, qualche". *Little* = "poco"; *a little* = "un po'". L'articolo *a* cambia il senso: *He has few friends* ("ha pochi amici", quasi nessuno) / *He has a few friends* ("ha qualche amico"). *A large number of* + plurale + verbo plurale; *a great deal of* + non numerabile + verbo singolare. *Hardly any* = "quasi nessuno / quasi niente": *hardly any time*, "quasi niente tempo".

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

No is a determiner and 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, a singular verb is traditional in formal writing and a plural verb is common in speech: *None of his love poems was / were printed by Donne himself*. Marvell, in T3, uses the plural: "But none, I think, do there embrace." *Any* in an affirmative sentence means "no matter which": Donne's "*any* man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind" means every death, whoever dies. Remember also *either* (one or the other of two) and *neither* (not one and not the other), which you studied in English 2: *Neither Donne nor Marvell saw his love poems collected in print*.

2.4.4 Uncountable nouns that are countable in Italian

Some nouns are uncountable in English but countable in Italian. They take a singular verb, no *a / an*, and no plural: *advice* (*consigli*), *information* (*informazioni*), *evidence* (*prove*), *research* (*ricerche*), *knowledge* (*conoscenze*), *news*, *progress*, *equipment*. To count them, use a **partitive** (*partitivo*), a phrase that names a unit of something: *a piece of advice*, *a piece of evidence*, *an item of news*. *Galileo's observations were new evidence that the heavens could change*.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Every of the stanzas has four lines.* → ✓ *Every one of the stanzas / Each of the stanzas has four lines.*
✗ *The professor gave us some useful informations and an advice.* → ✓ *some useful information and a piece of advice.*
✗ *Galileo found few moons round Jupiter, so he was very happy.* → ✓ *a few moons* (= alcune, non "poche").
✗ *I read the whole poems of Herbert.* → ✓ *all (of) Herbert's poems.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

No / none / any; i nomi non numerabili. *No* + nome ("nessun"), *none* da solo o con *of* ("nessuno di"): *none of the stars*. Dopo *none of* + plurale lo scritto formale usa il verbo al singolare, il parlato spesso il plurale: entrambi sono accettati. *Any* in frase affermativa = "qualsiasi": *any student can answer*. Attenzione ai nomi che in italiano sono plurali e numerabili ma in inglese no: *consigli = advice*, *informazioni = information*, *prove = evidence*, *ricerche = research*, *conoscenze = knowledge*, *notizie = news* (verbo singolare: *the news is good*).

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* · *wit*, *witty*
Body and soul	*soul* (*anima*) · *spirit* · *flesh* · *sin*, *sinner* · *grace* (God's free gift of love) · *salvation*, *be saved* · *repent*
The heavens	*the heavens* (literary: the sky) · *sphere* · *orbit* (noun and verb) · *planet* · *moon*, *satellite* · *telescope* · *star*, *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 usual for adverbs (*The lark flies upwards*), the form without *-s* for adjectives (*an upward movement*, *a backward glance*). *Afterwards* ("later") is a time adverb. Do not confuse *-ward(s)* with the adjective suffix *-ly* added to nouns, as in *heavenly* / *worldly* (adjectives, not adverbs): Herbert's eyes are turned heavenwards, away from worldly ambition.

2.5.2 Listening: a two-minute poem

Giulia and Marta are recording a short audio 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, and which idea from Donne does it borrow?

Tabella 2.6 Listening script — The Two-Minute Poem

Speaker	Line
Giulia	Hi everyone, and welcome to "The Two-Minute Poem". I'm Giulia, in Turin, and with me is Marta, who has done something brave this week.
Marta	I've written a metaphysical poem. Well — a metaphysical poem about my phone.
Giulia	About your phone. Go on, explain.
Marta	So, in class we read Donne's compasses: two lovers are like the two feet of one instrument. I thought: what's the object every one of us carries everywhere? A phone. And what does a phone need every single night?
Giulia	Its charger.
Marta	Exactly. So in my poem the speaker is the phone and the person she loves is the charger. During the day she goes out into the world, she talks to hundreds of people, and little by little her battery runs down.
Giulia	And the charger stays at home, plugged into the wall.
Marta	Yes — like Donne's fixed foot. It doesn't move, but it's the reason she can move at all. At night she comes home with hardly any battery left, and in the last lines she says something like "you make me full again / without you every word I have would stop".
Giulia	I like that. But isn't it a bit sad? The phone is completely dependent.
Marta	That's what our teacher said! It could be read as a love poem, but another way of seeing it is as a poem about addiction — to the phone, or to a person. I left it ambiguous on purpose.
Giulia	Very metaphysical. What was the hardest part?
Marta	Developing it. A comparison is easy; a conceit has to keep going. Each stanza had to add one new detail of the charger — the cable, the light that turns green, the plug — and give it a meaning.
Giulia	And what does the green light mean?
Marta	That she's ready to leave again. So it's a poem about leaving, too, like the Valediction.
Giulia	Brilliant. Next week it's Sam's turn, from Bristol, with a poem about a lab balance. Thanks for listening, and see you in two minutes!

2.5.3 Speaking: offering and comparing readings

A good literary discussion does not look for one correct answer: it offers a reading, supports it with words from the text and compares it with other readings. Use tentative language to propose an interpretation, and polite language to compare yours 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'll see that… · This is reinforced by…
Offering an alternative	Another way of seeing it is… · On the other hand, 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's not either/or: it can be both.

1. **Pairs.** Student A reads "Death, be not proud" as a poem of faith; Student B reads it as a poem of fear disguised as confidence. Prepare two minutes each, then compare 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 with one quotation; the group agrees on a summary of 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, and a **writer's note** of 80–100 words that explains the comparison and how you developed it. The note is a short piece of critical prose about your own work: it names the two things compared, the points of likeness, and the effect you wanted. Read Sam's model.

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

The Balance

We are the two pans of the laboratory scale:
when you are heavy with your news, I rise;
when I go down with mine, you lift me up.
No weight in one is lost; the other feels it.

They tell us to be careful, measure, wait,
read the small needle trembling at the centre.
It trembles still. That trembling is the proof
that what is laid on you is laid on me.

And when at last the needle comes to rest,
two equal arms, one point that holds them both,
no one will say we cancelled one another:
we will have weighed exactly what we are.

Writer's note
My poem compares a friendship to a beam balance, the scale we use in the science lab. The two pans are the two friends: when one is "heavy" with problems, the other rises, and the needle at the centre shows that each one feels the other's weight. As in Donne's compasses, I developed the conceit step by step: the pans, the needle, the moment of balance. The last stanza turns "balance" into a moral idea — equality. I chose short, plain words and scientific verbs (*measure*, *weigh*) to keep the tone calm. (91 words)

Structure. Stanza 1 sets up the conceit (the pans); stanza 2 develops one detail (the needle); stanza 3 resolves it (the balance at rest) and turns the image into an idea. The note answers three questions: *What is compared? How is it developed? What effect did I want?*

IN SINTESI

Checklist — a conceit poem.

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

Task. Write your own poem (12–16 lines) and writer's note (80–100 words). Choose an everyday object from a science lab, a sport or technology — a magnet, a pendulum, a satellite, a relay race — and use it as a conceit for a relationship or a feeling. **Research (TIC).** Before you write,

look at the Museo Galileo's online collections (Florence) or the Royal Society's website for an old scientific instrument and how it works; note your source and check it against a second one.

2.6 Connections: Marino and the Baroque

Donne and Marino were almost exact contemporaries: Giambattista Marino was born in Naples in 1569 and died there in 1625. He was the most famous poet in Europe in his time, admired and imitated from Spain to Poland; from 1615 to 1623 he lived in Paris at the court of Marie de' Medici — the mother of Henrietta Maria, the future queen of England. His long mythological poem *Adone* was printed in Paris in 1623. In a satirical sonnet against a rival poet, Gaspare Murtola (the *Murtoleide*, "fischiata" XXXIII), he wrote three lines that became the motto of Italian Baroque poetry:

> 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*, fischiata XXXIII, ll. 9–11 (text of the 1913 Laterza edition of Marino's *Poesie varie*)

"The poet's aim is wonder (I speak of the excellent poet, not the clumsy one): whoever cannot astonish should go and work in the stables!" (translation by the editors). Note the irony: in the sonnet Marino pretends to praise Murtola, whose verses make readers "wonder" only at how bad they are. But the first line, taken out of its context, summed up the aim of **concettismo** (*concettismo*), the Italian Baroque taste for the *concetto* — the ingenious, surprising image. The **Baroque** (*Barocco*) is the name given to the European art and culture of the seventeenth century that sought movement, emotion and astonishment: Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1647–52) in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, with its marble clouds and golden rays, is its most famous image. In 1654 the Turin-born Emanuele Tesauro, a priest who had left the Jesuit order, published in Turin a treatise on metaphor with a revealing title: *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, "the Aristotelian telescope" — the metaphor as an instrument for seeing things that the eye alone cannot see.

So Donne and Marino both love surprise, but they use it differently. Marino's conceits are mainly decorative and sensual: a lady's hair, a rose, a nightingale become occasions for dazzling, musical variations. Donne's conceits are **arguments**: the compasses do not decorate the farewell, they prove that the lovers cannot be separated. Marino wants the reader to admire; Donne wants the reader to agree. Both, however, show the same seventeenth-century discovery: the world can be described in many new ways, and the poet's mind can connect anything with anything.

COLLEGAMENTI

Geometry: why the compasses draw a circle. A circle is the set of all points of a plane at the same distance r (the radius) from a fixed point (the centre). A pair of compasses produces exactly this: the fixed foot keeps the centre, and the opening between the feet keeps the distance constant while the moving foot turns. That is why Donne can say "Thy firmness makes my circle *just*": if the fixed foot slipped, the curve would not be a circle and would not close on its starting point. If each leg has length L and the angle between the legs is θ, the radius is $r = 2L \sin(\theta/2)$. With legs of 10 cm, an angle of 60° gives $r = 2 \times 10 \times \sin 30° = 10$ cm; an angle of 90° gives $r = 20 \times \sin 45° \approx 14.1$ cm. The wider the journey, the more the fixed foot must "lean" — exactly as in the poem.

COLLEGAMENTI

Astronomy: Galileo's telescope. Galileo did not invent the telescope: it was first described in the Netherlands in 1608. In 1609 he built his own and improved it until, as he wrote in *Sidereus Nuncius*, objects appeared almost a thousand times larger and more than thirty times nearer than to the naked eye. The two numbers agree: a magnification of 30 times in length means about $30 \times 30 = 900$ times in area. On 7 January 1610 he saw three small "stars" near Jupiter, and in the following nights a fourth; by watching them change position night after night he understood that they were moons orbiting the planet. Today they are called the Galilean moons: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. Donne knew of these discoveries: 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, gloss old words (*doth*, *thou*, *then*, which can mean *than* or *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*)? Do the same with a Latin text (find the verb, the subject, the object, then translate) or with an Italian Baroque sonnet such as Marino's: the technique is the same in every language, and a good paraphrase is always the first step towards a commentary.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Forgotten and rediscovered. After Johnson, the Metaphysical poets were read by few people for more than a century. In 1921 the scholar H. J. C. Grierson published an anthology, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, and the poet T. S. Eliot reviewed it in an essay, "The Metaphysical Poets", which praised their unity of thought and feeling. From then on Donne became one of the most admired poets in English, and the compasses one of the most famous images in the language. You will meet Eliot next year.

SINTESI

- The new science — Copernicus (1543), Kepler (1609), Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610) — shook the old picture of the universe; Donne wrote that "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" (1611).
- Religious tension (Puritans, Laud's ceremonies, persecuted Catholics) and personal devotion shaped the poetry of the 1610s–1630s.
- Charles I (1625–1649) and the Catholic Henrietta Maria created an elegant, cosmopolitan court; from 1629 to 1640 Charles ruled without Parliament.
- Donne's, Herbert's and Marvell's poems circulated mainly in manuscript and were mostly printed after their deaths (1633, 1633, 1681).
- "Metaphysical poetry" is a later and partly hostile label (Dryden 1693, Johnson 1779), not the name of a school.
- The metaphysical conceit links two very different things and develops the comparison logically; it goes with argument, dramatic openings, colloquial speech, 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 ("seize the day") is a classical theme; the Cavalier poets (Herrick, Carew, Lovelace, Suckling) treat it lightly, Marvell darkly.
- T1 develops the compasses conceit; T2 argues with Death through apostrophe and paradox; T3 is built like a syllogism: *if… but… therefore*.
- *Each* / *every* + singular; *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* and *knowledge* are uncountable.
- Marino's "È del poeta il fin la meraviglia" sums up Italian concettismo; Donne and Marino both seek surprise, but Donne argues while Marino decorates.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

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

2. ● Who turned "metaphysical" into the name of a group of poets, in his *Life of Cowley* (1779)?
   A. John Dryden
   B. Andrew Marvell
   C. Izaak Walton
   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. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The Metaphysical poets called themselves by that name. b Donne became Dean of St Paul's in 1621. c Most of Donne's love poems were printed in his lifetime. d Herbert was rector of a small parish near Salisbury. e Marvell worked with Milton for Cromwell's government. f Henrietta Maria was a Protestant princess from the Netherlands.

5. ●● Match the authors (1–4) with the works (a–d) and give the date of first publication. 1 Donne · 2 Herbert · 3 Marvell · 4 Herrick — a *Hesperides* · b *Miscellaneous Poems* · c *The Temple* · d *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences, with an example from the chapter: a metaphysical conceit · b paradox · c pattern poem · d apostrophe · e Cavalier poets.

7. ●●● Answer in 50–70 words. Why did the new science of Kepler and Galileo interest poets as well as astronomers? Refer to Donne's *An Anatomy of the World*.

Text Analysis

8. ● In T1, what does the fixed foot of the compasses represent?
   A. The speaker
   B. The journey
   C. The woman the speaker loves
   D. God

9. ●● T1. a How many stanzas does the conceit take? b Find two verbs that describe the movement of the fixed foot. c What does *just* mean in line 35? d Explain the last line in your own words.

10. ●● Scansion. Copy T1, l. 35: *Thy firmness makes my circle just*. Divide it into syllables, mark the stresses in CAPITALS and the feet with a vertical line. How many feet are there, and what is the metre called?

11. ●● T2. a Find the apostrophe and say who is addressed. b Find three things that Death is "slave" to. c Where is the volta? d Paraphrase the final couplet in modern English.

12. ●● T3. a Rewrite lines 1–2 starting with *If*. b Find the image of Time in ll. 21–22 and explain it. c Which words in ll. 25–30 are connected with the grave? d What is the tone of ll. 31–32?

13. ●●● Compare T2 and T3 (80–100 words): how do the two speakers imagine death, and what do they conclude?

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (80–100 words) on this point: "In T1 the conceit turns a technical instrument into a symbol of faithful love."

Language

15. ● Choose the correct sentence.
    - **A.** Every of the poets wrote about death.
    - **B.** Each poets wrote about death.
    - **C.** Every one of the poets wrote about death.
    - **D.** Each of poets wrote about death.

16. ● Complete with *few*, *a few*, *little* or *a little*. a Herbert lived only _____ years at Bemerton: he died in 1633. b There is _____ evidence that Donne wrote the Valediction for his wife: only Walton's story. c Marvell had _____ interest in publishing his lyrics. d With _____ patience, a difficult poem becomes clear. e Very _____ readers knew Marvell's lyrics before 1681. f I've read _____ of Donne's sermons — three or four.

17. ● Complete with *each*, *every*, *all* or *whole*. a The Valediction is built on one image that fills the _____ final part. b _____ stanza of T1 has four lines. c Donne's compasses have a foot at _____ end. d _____ the Holy Sonnets are about salvation. e _____ of the four moons has its own orbit. f Galileo spent the _____ night at the telescope.

18. ●● Rewrite the sentences with the word in brackets so that the meaning stays the same. a Not one of Marvell's love poems was printed in his lifetime. (none) b Almost no copies of the first edition survive. (hardly) c Many poems circulated in manuscript. (number) d The poem contains a lot of learning. (deal) e All the stanzas of T1 rhyme *abab*. (every)

19. ●● Find and correct the mistake in each sentence (✗). a ✗ Our teacher gave us an useful advice about the essay. b ✗ We need more informations about Herbert's life. c ✗ There are many evidences that Donne revised his poems. d ✗ The whole students enjoyed the poem. e ✗ Few research has been done on this manuscript. f ✗ Every students must bring a copy of the text.

20. ●● Write sentences about the chapter using these quantifiers: a quite a few · b hardly any · c a great deal of · d none of · e either · f neither… nor.

21. ●● *Any* = "no matter which". Rewrite using *any*. a It doesn't matter which poem you choose: it will be difficult. b Every death diminishes me, whoever dies. c You can ask me whatever question you like. d The rule works with every uncountable noun.

22. ●●● Translate into English. a Ogni studente ha letto tutta la poesia, ma pochi l'hanno capita. b La professoressa ci ha dato alcuni consigli e molte informazioni utili. c Nessuna delle poesie d'amore di Donne fu stampata da lui stesso.

23. ●● Complete with *a great deal of* or *a large number of*, and choose the verb. a _____ poets (was / were) influenced by Donne. b _____ wit (is / are) needed to develop a conceit. c _____ research (has / have) been done on Herbert. d _____ manuscripts (contain / contains) Donne's poems.

Vocabulary

24. ● Complete with words from the vocabulary table: *soul*, *orbit*, *grace*, *persuade*, *prove*, *sphere*. a The four moons _____ Jupiter. b In the old cosmology each planet was carried by a crystal _____. c The speaker of T3 tries to _____ the woman to love him now. d In T2 Donne wants to _____ that Death is not powerful. e For Herbert, salvation is a gift of God's _____. f Donne imagines that the lovers have one _____.

25. ● Complete with a word ending in *-ward* or *-wards*. a The lark in "Easter Wings" flies {up}. b After the lecture we went {home}. c Herbert's poems are an {in} journey of the soul. d The speaker throws a {back} glance at his past. e We met for coffee {after}.

26. ●● Match the words to make collocations, then use three of them in sentences: 1 draw · 2 heavenly · 3 save · 4 a dramatic · 5 a valid — a body · b a circle · c opening · d argument · e someone's soul.

Writing and Speaking

27. ●●● Writing. Write a poem (12–16 lines, free form) built on one conceit taken from science, sport or technology, and a writer's note (80–100 words) that explains the comparison and how you developed it. Use the checklist.

28. ●● Speaking. In pairs, offer and compare two readings of "To His Coy Mistress": Student A thinks it is a clever seduction game; Student B thinks it is a serious poem about death. Speak for about two minutes each, using expressions from the Useful language table.

Towards B2

29. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the best word (A–D) for each gap. Donne's poems were (1) {A circulated · B passed · C spread · D sent} in manuscript for years before they were printed. (2) {A Few · B Little · C A little · D Much} readers outside his circle knew them. When they (3) {A finally · B lastly · C firstly · D lately} appeared in 1633, the (4) {A each · B every · C all · D whole} collection was reprinted several times in the following decades, but readers needed a (5) {A great · B large · C big · D wide} deal of patience to follow their arguments. Critics later (6) {A accused · B blamed · C charged · D criticised} Donne of being too learned.

30. ●● Open cloze. Write one word in each gap. Herbert spent the last three years _____ (1) his life as a country priest. _____ (2) of the poems in *The Temple* was printed while he was alive. He sent them to a friend, asking _____ (3) to decide whether to print them or burn them. Today _____ (4) every anthology of English poetry includes "Easter Wings", a poem _____ (5) shape imitates two pairs of wings. Few poets have used the page _____ (6) inventively.

31. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. a Galileo's _____ changed astronomy. (DISCOVER) b Donne was a famous _____ at St Paul's. (PREACH) c The conceit seems absurd, but it is very _____ . (INGENUITY) d Johnson's judgement was largely _____ . (FAVOUR) e Marvell's images of the grave are _____ dark. (SURPRISE) f The _____ of the Moon's surface surprised Galileo's readers. (ROUGH) g Herbert's poems are full of _____ to God. (DEVOTE)

32. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals. Use two to five words, including the word given. a Not many students understood the poem at first. FEW → Only {…} the poem at first. b There was almost no time left before the exam. HARDLY → There was {…} before the exam. c All the stanzas have four lines. EVERY → {…} four lines. d No poem in this chapter mentions Galileo. NONE → {…} in this chapter mentions Galileo. e The poem contains a lot of scientific vocabulary. DEAL → The poem contains {…} scientific vocabulary.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. B: the sections on Donne, Herbert and Marvell, with the complete texts of the poems in this chapter.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "metaphysical poets", "conceit", "carpe diem" and "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 chapter on the early Stuarts and the reign of Charles I.
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *each* and *every*, *all* and *whole*, *few* and *little*, *none*, and uncountable nouns.

Glossario del capitolo

Apostrophe
apostrofe — speaking directly to an absent person, a thing or an idea as if it could hear.

Baroque
Barocco — the European art and culture of the 17th century, seeking movement, emotion and wonder.

Carpe diem
cogli l'attimo — the theme "seize the day": enjoy the present, because time passes and death comes (from Horace).

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

Concettismo
concettismo — the Italian Baroque taste for ingenious, surprising images (*concetti*), associated with Marino.

Determiner
determinante — a word before a noun that shows which thing or how much (*the, this, each, some*).

Devotion
devozione — private prayer and meditation; religious feeling shown in personal practice.

Iambic tetrameter
tetrametro giambico — a line of four iambic feet (eight syllables): "Thy FIRMness MAKES my CIRcle JUST".

Metaphysical conceit
concetto metafisico — a comparison between two very unlike things, developed logically over several lines.

Metaphysical poetry
poesia metafisica — the intellectual, argumentative poetry of Donne, Herbert, Marvell and others; a label given later by Dryden and Johnson.

New philosophy
nuova filosofia — the new science of the early 17th century (Kepler, Galileo) that questioned the old picture of the universe.

Orbit
orbita — the path of a planet or moon round another body; also a verb (*to orbit Jupiter*).

Paradox
paradosso — a statement that seems contradictory but contains a truth ("Death, thou shalt die!").

Partitive
partitivo — a phrase that counts an uncountable noun: *a piece of advice*, *an item of news*.

Pattern poem
carme figurato — a poem printed so that its shape imitates its subject.

Quantifier
quantificatore — a determiner that expresses quantity (*few, a little, many, no, all*).

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

Valediction
commiato, addio — a farewell, or a poem of farewell.

Soluzioni

1. B (A is Kepler, 1609; C was not seen clearly until later in the century; D is Copernicus, 1543).

2. D (Dryden had said in 1693 that Donne "affects the metaphysics"; Johnson made it a label).

3. A (Herrick, *Hesperides*, 1648).

4. a F — the label was given later by critics (Dryden, Johnson). b T. c F — very few were printed in his lifetime; they circulated in manuscript and were printed in 1633. d T (Bemerton, from 1630). e T (from 1657). f F — she was the Catholic daughter of Henri IV of France and Marie de' Medici.

5. 1 d (1624) · 2 c (1633) · 3 b (1681) · 4 a (1648).

6. Model answers: a a surprising comparison between two very different things, developed logically over several lines (the lovers as compasses, T1); b a statement that seems contradictory but contains a truth ("Death, thou shalt die!", T2); c a poem whose printed shape imitates its subject (Herbert's "Easter Wings", shaped like wings); d speaking directly to an absent person, an object or an abstraction as if it could hear ("Death, be not proud"); e royalist poets of Charles I's time who wrote elegant, musical lyrics in Jonson's tradition (Herrick, Carew, Lovelace, Suckling).

7. Model answer: The new astronomy showed that the Moon was rough, that Jupiter had moons and that orbits were not perfect circles. For poets this was more than science: it meant that the order of the universe — and so the order of society and religion — could be wrong. In *An Anatomy of the World* Donne says that "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" and that "all coherence" is gone. (67 words)

8. C ("Thy soul, the fix'd foot").

9. a Three (stanzas 7–9, ll. 25–36). b *leans*, *hearkens after*, *grows erect* (also *doth* [move]; any two). c exact, perfect (a true, closed circle). d Model answer: Your faithfulness keeps my journey on the right course and brings me back to where I started — home to you.

10. thy FIRM | ness MAKES | my CIR | cle JUST — eight syllables, four feet, each unstressed + stressed (iambs): iambic tetrameter.

11. a "Death, be not proud": Death is addressed as a person. b fate, chance, kings, desperate men (any three). c At line 9 ("Thou'rt slave…"). d Model answer: After one short sleep we will wake up for ever, and there will be no more death: so, Death, you will die.

12. a If we had enough space and time, your shyness, Lady, would not be a crime. b Time is a winged chariot (a fast flying carriage) always behind the speaker: time chases us and is about to catch us. c *marble vault*, *worms*, *dust*, *ashes* (also *no more be found*). d Ironic, cold understatement, almost a dark joke.

13. Model answer: Both speakers face death, but in opposite ways. In T2 Donne challenges Death as a powerless servant; with Christian faith he concludes that after "one short sleep" we wake for ever, so death itself will die. In T3 Marvell's speaker sees no waking: death is the marble tomb, dust and "deserts of vast eternity". His conclusion is not faith but urgency — love now, before time ends. Both poets, however, use death as the premise of an argument. T2 is triumphant; T3 is anxious and ironic. (85 words)

14. Model answer: **Point:** In T1 Donne transforms a technical drawing instrument into a symbol of faithful love. **Evidence:** The woman is "the fix'd foot" that stays "in the centre" but "leans, and hearkens after" the speaker, while he must "obliquely run". **Explanation:** Each property of the compasses gets a meaning: the hinge joins the two lovers, the fixed foot shows her constancy, and the closed circle — "Thy firmness makes my circle just" — means that her faithfulness guarantees his return. The plain

technical words make the love seem as exact as geometry. (86 words)

15. C.

16. a a few (only three years, 1630–1633 — "a few" with *only*) · b little · c little · d a little · e few · f a few.

17. a whole · b Every / Each · c each (two ends) · d All · e Each · f whole.

18. a None of Marvell's love poems was / were printed in his lifetime. b Hardly any copies of the first edition survive. c A large number of poems circulated in manuscript. d The poem contains a great deal of learning. e Every stanza of T1 rhymes *abab*.

19. a a useful piece of advice / some useful advice · b more information · c a lot of evidence / much evidence · d All the students · e Little research · f Every student.

20. Model answers: a Quite a few of Donne's poems use images from science. b Hardly any of Marvell's lyrics were printed in his lifetime. c Herbert's poems show a great deal of formal invention. d None of these poets called himself "metaphysical". e You can read either the Valediction or the Holy Sonnet. f Neither Herbert nor Marvell saw his English poems collected in print. (Accept any correct sentences.)

21. a Any poem you choose will be difficult. b Any man's death diminishes me. c You can ask me any question (you like). d The rule works with any uncountable noun.

22. a Every student read / has read the whole poem, but few (of them) understood it. b The teacher gave us some advice / a few pieces of advice and a lot of useful information. c None of Donne's love poems was / were printed by Donne himself.

23. a A large number of poets were · b A great deal of wit is · c A great deal of research has · d A large number of manuscripts contain.

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

25. a upwards · b homewards (also *home*) · c inward · d backward · e afterwards.

26. 1 b (draw a circle) · 2 a (heavenly body) · 3 e (save someone's soul) · 4 c (a dramatic opening) · 5 d (a valid argument). Model sentences: Donne's poems often have a dramatic opening. Galileo saw a new heavenly body near Jupiter. A syllogism is a valid argument when its conclusion follows from its premises.

27. Guidance: one conceit stated early (e.g. a relationship as a magnet with two poles); each stanza adds a new point of likeness; a speaker addressing *you*; an ending that turns the image into an idea. The note (80–100 words) names the two things compared, explains the development stanza by stanza and the intended effect, in formal present-simple prose. Assess: conceit developed (not repeated), coherence, vocabulary, accuracy, word counts.

28. Model answer (A): "It could be read as a game: the speaker exaggerates comically — ten years before the Flood, two hundred years for each breast — and his 'therefore' is the trick of a lawyer who wants to win." (B): "I'd go along with that up to a point, but another way of seeing it is as a poem about fear: the images of the marble vault and the worms are too dark for a game. What strikes me is 'Deserts of vast eternity' — that's real terror. Perhaps the poem deliberately leaves both open."

29. 1 A (circulated) · 2 A (Few) · 3 A (finally) · 4 D (whole) · 5 A (great) · 6 A (accused … of).

30. 1 of · 2 None · 3 him · 4 almost / nearly (also *virtually*, *practically*) · 5 whose · 6 so (also *more*, = more inventively than Herbert).

31. a discoveries / discovery · b preacher · c ingenious · d unfavourable · e surprisingly · f roughness · g devotion.

32. a Only a few students understood · b hardly any time left · c Every stanza has · d None of the poems (verb *mentions*, singular, as in formal writing) · e a great deal of.