**A Valediction[[1]](#footnote-1): Forbidding Mourning[[2]](#footnote-2) (1611)**

As virtuous men pass mildly away,

And whisper to their souls to go,

Whilst some of their sad friends do say

The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,

No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;

'Twere profanation of our joys

To tell the laity[[3]](#footnote-3) our love.

Moving of th' earth[[4]](#footnote-4) brings harms and fears,

Men reckon what it did, and meant;

But trepidation of the spheres,[[5]](#footnote-5)

Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary[[6]](#footnote-6) lovers' love

(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit

Absence, because it doth remove

Those things which elemented[[7]](#footnote-7) it.

But we by a love so much refined,

That our selves know not what it is,

Inter-assured of the mind,

Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,

Though I must go, endure not yet

A breach, but an expansion,

Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so

As stiff twin compasses[[8]](#footnote-8) are two;

Thy soul, the fixed foot[[9]](#footnote-9), makes no show

To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,

Yet when the other far doth roam,

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,[[10]](#footnote-10)

And makes me end where I begun.

John Donne is known as one of the metaphysical poets; known for philosophical exploration in their poems, they used somewhat obscure metaphorical conceits to connect common, mundane objects to explain or even transcend human emotions and experience.

In this poem, Donne uses three conceits as a metaphor for his relationship with his wife. Identify them and explain how that imagery supports his argument. \*Structure your response as if for the AP Exam; essay should be about two pages.\*

(Yes, this is hard. It’s supposed to be.)

1. farewell [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Donne wrote the poem for his wife before going to France. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Common people (not clergy) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. earthquakes [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. According to Ptolemaic astronomy, the planets sometimes moved violently, but these movements were not felt by people on earth. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Literally, under the moon; mortal and subject to change [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. composed [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Mathematical compass, for making circles [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The stationary compass arm [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Symbol of perfection, completion [↑](#footnote-ref-10)