

Date 11 / 16 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "Death, be not Proud" (Holy Sonnet 10)Author / Director / John Donne

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I found this poem while browsing Shmoop for poems to log, and it's interesting title caught my attention.

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

"Death, be not proud" is basically a sonnet about a speaker who attempts at undermining and making fun of death. He or she begins by treating death as a person and by calling it something so worthless and ineffectual, almost feeling bad for its frivolity. He or she even tells Death "yet canst thou kill me," claiming that people who die are actually not dead. Moreover, instead of fearing Death like many do, the speaker declared that the best people in fact want to die because it brings more pleasure than life on earth could ever provide. Finally, the speaker concludes that death is the beginning of an eternal life in heaven, in which Death is no more.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

Death is the obviously a theme in this poem, but it is not looked at dreadfully and mundanely just as people presume it is. Rather, death, which should be feared, becomes the slave of humanity and tamed of its horrible nature. In fact, the speaker makes it seem as if death is better than life itself. This is obviously an extreme exaggeration; however, it aids in the optimistic outlook of the poem in regards to death. Although death is something natural and unavoidable, the poem claims that death is not something that has control over humanity; rather, it is something that should be wholly accepted and even looked forward to. Rebirth is also a subtle theme in "Death, be not proud," as the poem argues that death in itself is really a rebirth into a better existence that death can no longer tarnish.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"Death, be not proud" is a sonnet predominantly in the style and form of the Renaissance Italian poet Francesco Petrarca, and hence it is called a Petrarchan sonnet. The Petrarchan sonnet is characteristic of fourteen lines in the rhyme scheme ABBAABBA and CDCD; however, this sonnet spins thing up a little bit. The rhyme scheme does not exactly fit the Petrarchan model, and rhyming isn't even evident in the last two lines, either because Renaissance English had words spoken oddly or because rhyme was supposed to die as death died in the poem. Sleep becomes a symbol of death because it is something so pristine and harmless, much like what death actually is. Moreover, contradictions, such as the dead not dying and death being put to rest also add to the poem's optimistic interpretation of death. Death is also personified in the poem.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

"Death, be not proud" essentially takes away all the worries of life and advocates a carefree lifestyle in which death is not even taken into account. Although this approach to life would obviously be ridiculous, I significantly enjoy this poem because it gives hope for the future. When death is imminent, this poem is comforting because it aids in the realization that there is life after death and that people are better off in this new existence. In times of grief and mourning, this poem is probably significantly soothing. Even in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein, the creator of the monster who becomes mentally deranged by his creation, recognizes that death would be much more desirable than to persist through the pain and suffering of human life. When death crosses his path while in the Atlantic on a tiny boat, Victor submits to death rather than shrinking in fear, (even though he doesn't end up dying) just like the poem suggests. This is what makes the poem so poetic. Knowing that death is inevitable, the speaker of the poem wholeheartedly advocates death's acceptance, and he or she attempts to make the best out of such a seemingly melancholy and dismal situation. Death is the ultimate inhibition to mankind, and transforming it into something not necessarily ideal but significantly better than it outwardly appears leaves people free rather than bound to the fear of death. Without having to contemplate death, human capacity for discovery, growth, and development would be infinitesimal, and life would be forever progressed on earth.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)