

Name: _____

Class: _____

No Man Is An Island

By John Donne

1624

John Donne (1572-1631) was an English poet whose time spent as a cleric in the Church of England often influenced the subjects of his poetry. In 1623, Donne suffered a nearly fatal illness, which inspired him to write a book of meditations on pain, health, and sickness called Devotions upon Emergent Occasions. "No Man is an Island" is a famous section of "Meditation XVII" from this book. Though the text was originally a paragraph taken from an essay, it has been adapted over the course of the many years it has been in the public domain and is sometimes presented as a poem. The original source of the line breaks in the "poem" version is unknown. As you read, take notes on how the author uses figurative language to describe humanity.

Modern Version

- [1] No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod¹ be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory² were, as
- [5] well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;³ it tolls for thee.



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Early Modern English Version

- [10] No man is an lland, intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Manor of thy friends or of thine
- [15] owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

1. a clump of soil
2. a point of high land that juts out into a large body of water, like a peninsula
3. ringing a bell to mark or announce something (such as the time or a person's passing)

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best describes a theme in the text?
 - A. People tend to care only about themselves and cannot easily connect with others.
 - B. Peace among different people and countries is possible through shared grief.
 - C. Everyone and everything in the world is connected as part of a larger whole.
 - D. Loneliness is one of the worst fates one can suffer and no one should have to bear it.

2. How does the figurative language in lines 1-4 develop the text's theme?
 - A. It compares people to land masses, and when one clod is washed away it lessens the continent; this develops the theme of connection between individuals as parts of a whole.
 - B. It compares people to islands, and when one island loses land it only impacts the one island; this develops the theme of people who exist within their own worlds.
 - C. It compares the world to the continent of Europe; this develops the theme of European expansion across the world, uniting different parts of it under colonial rule.
 - D. It compares different peoples to land masses, and when one clod is washed away it lessens the continent; this develops the theme of peace and unity among different countries.

3. PART A: What does the word "diminish" most likely mean as used in line 6?
 - A. to end
 - B. to belittle
 - C. to lessen
 - D. to sadden

4. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "No man is an island entire of itself" (Line 1)
 - B. "if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe / is the less" (Lines 3-4)
 - C. "as any manner of thy friends or of thine / own were" (Lines 5-6)
 - D. "I am involved in mankind." (Line 7)

5. How do lines 8-9 contribute to the overall meaning of the text?

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. How does our modern society value connection between people? Is this similar to how Donne conceived of it?
2. In the context of this poem, how do people face death? How are people affected or not affected by grief today? Cite evidence from the text, your personal experience, or other sources of history and literature.
3. How does the poet likely define friendship? What does it mean to be a friend?
4. In the context of this poem, what is the importance of community? What does it mean to be a part of a community? Cite evidence from the text, your personal experience, or other sources of history and literature.