

LESSON PLAN 3



Is no man an island?

TIME: 55 minutes

This lesson is divided into three stages: warming-up, central and follow-up one.

PREREQUISITES:

- Knowledge of the basic features of "Meditation 17"
- Notion of the general themes of "Meditation 17"
- Ability to identify theme in a text
- Ability to infer meaning

AIMS: This lesson is designed to encourage thinking about our connectedness to and responsibilities toward others. Donne's meditation is just a useful starting point which will be used to demonstrate humankind's need to refute an impersonal natural order.

PERSONAL AIMS: Students will evaluate the messages from selected poetry, literature, art and popular music to discover relevance of and make comparisons to Donne's philosophy from "*Devotions*" (1623): "No man is an island, entire in itself;..."

OBJECTIVES:

- Express individual perspectives through analysis of personal, social, cultural and historical issues.
- Arrange details, reasons and examples effectively and persuasively
- Refine critical thinking skills and apply criteria to evaluate text and multimedia
- Draw conclusions based on evidence, reasons or relevant information
- Evaluate how the author's choice and use of a genre shapes the meaning of the literary work.

MATERIALS/RESOURCES NEEDED:

- Copy of words from John Donne's "Meditation 17" (from "*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*", 1623) which begin "No man is an island..." and end "... and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee" to hand out at the end of the lesson.
- Print of "The Fall of Icarus" by P. Brueghel the Elder
- Tape of and lyrics of Simon & Garfunkel's "I am a Rock"

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES NEEDED:

CD player

STAGE 1: WARMING-UP

Time: 10mins.

As a warmer to the activity students brainstorm possible meanings of Donne's message. They should cite examples from current events (random killings or deaths from natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Iran) or historical events (World Wars...).

Is the message more appropriate to a personal, social or political level?

What are some consequences of following Donne's philosophy?

STAGE 2: CENTRAL STAGE: CONTRASTING TWO DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

Time: 30-35mins.

2a. (10mins) Illustrate students the situation of the song (without identifying it as a once-popular song) in such a way to have them elicit and visualise what's going on. Students should also discover contrasts to Donne's piece. Students should consider tone, mood, message of the poet and speculate on underlying reasons for this perspective.

2b. Hand out copy of the song lyrics & play tape of the song.

Discuss the fact that that song was written when Paul Simon was quite young, and Donne's sermon was written after his 50th birthday. Ask is this is significant.

2b. Divide the students into groups of 3-4. Using more prints of by P. Brueghel's "The Fall of Icarus" (without identifying title) have each group study the work and attempt to determine its "meaning by choosing at least 3 details to describe it. Make no mention of the drowning Icarus in

the lower right foreground. Students should report their findings regarding the purpose of the painting, any messages Brueghel has for the viewer, any connection to Donne's piece.

2c. Reveal the title of the painting. Have students look for Icarus. Then discuss title and placement of Icarus in the painting.

STAGE 3: FOLLOW-UP STAGE

Time: 10mins.

3a. Feedback: Ask students to comment on comparison/contrast to Donne's passage.

- What would Donne say about the seeming nonchalance of ploughman & shepherd toward a boy falling from the sky?
- How is this attitude demonstrated in modern life, to modern events?

ASSESSMENT

Using information and ideas from this lesson, students should write a short paper (100-150 words) defending or refuting John Donne's philosophy. The writer should convince her readers that Donne's words do or do not have relevance in modern society.