Poetry Lesson

For 12th graders in HS English Class in an urban setting, mix of students L1’s-mostly English speaking.
Objectives

- **Content Objectives:**
  - To understand the term “Metaphysical poetry” and be able to explain it/spot it in a poem
  - Learning important reading skills for poetry

- **Language Objectives:**
  - To be able to read early 17th century English
  - Better understanding of Metaphors and how they are used in speech
“Metaphysical poetry”

- a style of verse which flourished in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Key Components

- verse forms
- complex figures of speech that are elaborate and surprising metaphors
- themes that are eccentric and have unexpected chains of reasoning.
Modern Examples:

U2- “And a woman needs a man, like a fish needs a bicycle.”

V.V. Brown- “Baby there’s a shark in the water, there’s something underneath bed, oh please believe when I say, baby there's a shark in the water, I caught them barking at the moon, better get here soon!!”

Cee Lo Green- “I guess he's an Xbox and I'm more Atari, But the way you play your game ain't fair.”
MARK but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead;
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two;
And this, alas! is more than we would do
THE FLEA.
by John Donne

1. Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
2. How little that which thou deniest me is;
3. It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
4. And in this flea our two bloods mingled be,
5. Thou know'st that this cannot be said
6. A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead;
7. Yet this enjoys before it woo,
8. And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two;
9. And this, alas! is more than we would do

KEY VOCAB
- Thou = you
- Thee = you
- Thy = you
- Maidenhead = virginity.
- Woo = to seek the favor, affection, or love of with intent to marry
- Pamper'd = to overfeed, especially with very rich food
10. O stay, three lives in one flea spare

11. Where we almost, yea, more than married are

12. This flea is you and I, and this

13. Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is.

14. Though parents grudge, and you, we're met,

15. And cloister'd in these living walls of jet.

16. Though use make you apt to kill me,

17. Let not to that self-murder added be,

18. And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

KEY VOCAB

- Stay = to suspend or delay

- Cloister'd = secluded from the world; from Cloister-to confine in a monastery or convent.

- Jet = a compact black coal, susceptible of a high polish, used for making beads, jewelry, buttons, etc. “black as jet.”

- Apt = likely or prone to

- Sacrilege = the violation or profanation of anything sacred or held sacred.
19. Cruel and sudden, hast thou since

20. *purpled* thy nail in blood of innocence?

21. *Wherein* could this flea guilty be,

22. Except in that drop which it suck'd from thee?

23. Yet thou *triumph'st*, and say'st that thou

24. Find'st not thyself nor me the weaker now.

25. 'Tis true; then learn how false fears be;

26. Just so much *honour*, when thou *yield'st* to me,

27. Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee

**KEY VOCAB**

- *Hast* = Has
- *Purpled* = bloodied
- *Wherein* = In what place or respect
- *Triumph'st* = Victorious; conquering
- *Honour* = (great respect, regard, esteem) Here it means reputation
- *Yield'st* = to give, surrender, give in
## Why a Flea?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the characteristics of the FLEA?</th>
<th>What do these characteristic’s represent in the poem?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It suck’d” blood</td>
<td>It has taken blood from the speaker and the woman and mixed them together- to mingle blood is an old term for ‘sex’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoyed “before it woo”</td>
<td>Took the woman’s blood without asking for her hand in marriage and mingled there blood without compliments</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Jet” black</td>
<td>They mingled there blood in these, dark, safe, holy walls – nobody can see (nobody will see)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Innocent” death</td>
<td>The innocence of the flea is similar to Donne’s theory that pre-marital sex is also innocent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Group 1

Scorpion
Group 2

Bee
Group 3

Butterfly
Group 4

Ant
Example - Spider

1. Spiders make webs
2. Spiders eat smaller insects
3. Spiders sit and wait for long periods of time
4. Spiders like dark, cool places
5. Spiders wrap up their prey like leftovers- taking a long time to eat them

If you run out of descriptions of actions that your insect makes feel free to describe the insect physically
Group 1

Insect = Scorpion

Topic = Heartbreak
Insect = Bee

Topic = crime
+ Group 3

Insect = Butterfly

Topic = Inspiration
Group 4

Insect = Ant

Topic = Fear
Example-
Spider=Insect, death=topic

He lies in wait for me

Hanging on the invisible threads of time

Weaving a web to capture me

A trap, most cleverly set

Sticky, clear and unavoidable

In the dark places I forgot about

Death waits, like this spider, to snuff me out
Helping Questions

- How does your insect represent your topic? Look at your groups list of traits and try to make a connection!

- Think about John Donne’s *The Flea*, and how he incorporated a flea’s characteristics

- **REMEMBER=** 5 line minimum free verse poem (can rhyme if you like)
Your hw is to look at the poem *THE BROKEN HEART* by John Donne. Read it at least 3 times!

I also want you to go through the whole poem and underline what you believe makes this poem a “Metaphysical poem.”

-What is the theme? Where are the metaphors? What ideas does John Donne use that are new/strange? How is it different from *THE FLEA*?