

“On a Drop of Dew”
Andrew Marvell

SEE how the Orient Dew,
Shed from the Bosom of the Morn
Into the blowing Roses,
Yet careless of its Mansion new;
For the clear Region where 'twas born 5
Round in its self incloses:
And in its little Globes Extent,
Frames as it can its native Element.
How it the purple flow'r does slight,
Scarce touching where it lyes, 10
But gazing back upon the Skies,
Shines with a mournful Light;
Like its own Tear,
~~Because so long~~ divided from the Sphear.
Restless it roules and unsecure, 15
Trembling lest it grow impure:
Till the warm Sun pitty it's Pain,
And to the Skies exhale it back again.
So the Soul, that Drop, that Ray 20
Of the clear Fountain of Eternal Day,
Could it within the humane flow'r be seen,
Remembring still its former height,
Shuns the sweat leaves and blossoms green;
And, recollecting its own Light,
Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express 25
The greater Heaven in an Heaven less.
In how coy a Figure wound,
Every way it turns away:
So the World excluding round,
Yet receiving in the Day. 30
Dark beneath, but bright above:
Here disdainig, there in Love.
How loose and easie hence to go:
How girt and ready to ascend.
Moving but on a point below, 35
It all about does upwards bend.
Such did the Manna's sacred Dew destil;
White, and intire, though congeal'd and chill.
Congeal'd on Earth: but does, dissolving, run
Into the Glories of th' Almighty Sun. 40

Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew"
AP Literature and Composition

Context: Marvell wrote "On a Drop of Dew" in 1681 and his poem expresses elements characteristic of two larger literary periods: the Puritan and Metaphysical. Marvell was greatly influenced by fellow poet John Milton from the Puritan Period, holding primary his goal of helping mankind move "purely" in the path of God by relation to how water moves through the natural world, "as a drop of dew," strictly adhering to God's design. However, it is his use of the extended metaphor as a rhetorical device to lead the reader towards this understanding that was a meaningful aspect of the Metaphysical poets with whom he was most closely associated. This device will be the focus of this lesson.

Prompt: Read Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew" carefully. Then write an essay in which you describe the speaker's use of extended metaphor to describe the complex relationship between God and man. Using specific references to the text, you may focus upon how the imagery, tone and structure of the verse reveal the speaker's meaning.

Guided Practice:

Who is the speaker?

How does the speaker use imagery to personify the dew drop?

Where is the turn in the verse? How does this turn effectively provide a meaningful transition in the verse?

What is the predominant tone in the first sentence? How does the tone change through the remainder of the verse?

What does Marvell imply about the human soul by comparing it to a drop of dew?