

1995 Poem: "The Broken Heart" (John Donne)

**Prompt:** Read the following poem carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the speaker uses the varied imagery of the poem to reveal his attitude toward the nature of love.

### The Broken Heart by John Donne

He is stark mad, whoever says,  
That he hath been in love an hour,  
Yet not that love so soon decays,  
But that it can ten in less space devour ;  
Who will believe me, if I swear  
That I have had the plague a year?  
Who would not laugh at me, if I should say  
I saw a flash of powder burn a day?

Ah, what a trifle is a heart,  
If once into love's hands it come !  
All other griefs allow a part  
To other griefs, and ask themselves but some ;  
They come to us, but us love draws ;  
He swallows us and never chaws ;  
By him, as by chain'd shot, whole ranks do die ;  
He is the tyrant pike, our hearts the fry.

If 'twere not so, what did become  
Of my heart when I first saw thee?  
I brought a heart into the room,  
But from the room I carried none with me.  
If it had gone to thee, I know  
Mine would have taught thine heart to show  
**More pity unto me ;** but Love, alas !  
At one first blow did shiver it as glass.

Yet nothing can to nothing fall,  
Nor any place be **empty quite ;**  
Therefore I think my breast hath all  
Those pieces still, though they be not unite ;  
And now, as broken glasses show  
A hundred lesser faces, so  
My rags of heart can like, wish, and adore,  
But after one such love, can love no more.