Poem #5

“Death be not Proud” by John Donne

DEATH be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then;
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

The official name of this poem is “Divine Sonnet X,” although is it most frequently called by its first line. If you were going to name this poem, what would you call it? John Donne (“Donne” is pronounced like “done”) was a poet who became an Anglican priest.

This poem is a challenge to Death that tries to convince Death that he is not powerful or to be feared. Since most people are afraid of death, this poem challenges a common idea.
Taking it apart

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This technique, addressing a concept or someone who is absent as if the thing or person were there, is called apostrophe.

One reason death isn’t scary is that sleep is enjoyable, and death is just like a better sleep, so death must be even better than sleeping.

Death can’t be scary when it can’t even control when people die because kings send people into war, and some people commit suicide.

All the awesome people die, so death must be great. Also, it brings rest and takes your soul to heaven.

Death hangs out with some bad company, so how powerful could it be?

Drugs can make people sleep even better than Death, so why should Death be so puffed up?

When we die, we will sleep for a second, and then we will wake up forever. The only thing that will ever really die is Death itself, so in that way, it is the weakest thing of all.

Donne begins the poem by telling Death that Death has no reason to be proud because it’s so scary, because it’s not. He will spend the rest of the poem explaining why Death isn’t scary.
**Memorizing it**

This poem has a strong rhyme scheme. The poem is a sonnet, so it has three quatrains and a couplet. Follow the directions below to figure out the rhyme scheme.

"Death be not Proud" by John Donne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Rhyme Scheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**Step 1:** Underline the last word of each line.

**Step 2:** Use marker to draw colored boxes around the quatrains and the couplet.

**Step 3:** Put an “A” on the line next to the last word of the first line, “thee.”

**Step 4:** Put a “B” on the line next to the last word of the second line because it doesn’t rhyme with “thee.”

**Step 5:** Put an “A” next to any word that rhymes with the last word of the first line, “thee.”

**Step 6:** Put a “B” next to any word that rhymes with the last word of the second line.

**Step 7:** Put a “C” next to the first word that doesn’t rhyme with either “A” or “B.”

**Step 8:** Put a “D” next to the first word that doesn’t rhyme with either “A” or “B” or “C” and so on until you go through the whole poem.
Memorizing it

Some of the words of this poem have been replaced with words that rhyme with the original word. Find the replacement words and write the correct words above them.

“Death be not Proud” by John Donne

DEATH be not loud, though none have called thee
Flighty and dreadful, door, thou cart not so,
For, those, doom thou think’st, chow dost overthrow,
Cry not, poor death, nor bet canst thou bill me.
From best and sleep, hitch but sky pictures be,
Much treasure, then from bee, much more must stow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Test of their stones, and soul’s delivery.
Thou art crave to Fate, Dance, kings, and desperate hen,
And dost with poison, chore, and sickness knell,
And poppy, or charms man make us creep as well,
And cheddar than thy stroke; fly swell’st thou then;
Done short sleep last, we flake eternally,
And death shall be glow more; death, thou shalt shy.