

Poem #1

"No Man Is an Island" by John Donne

No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less,
as well as if a promontory were,
as well as if a manor of thy friend's
or of thine own were.

Any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind;
and therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.



In this poem, John Donne explores the idea of the connectedness of people. People are not isolated islands. We are all a part of a larger thing, and if one person dies, everyone is affected.

Although this poem does not have a strong rhyme scheme, it is short and easy to memorize.

Taking it apart

No one is by himself. We are all connected to each other.

"No Man Is an Island" by John Donne

No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main.

"the main" is the mainland

A clod is a piece of dirt.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less,
as well as if a promontory were,
as well as if a manor of thy friend's
or of thine own were.

A promontory is a big rocky hunk of land that juts out into the sea. So this is saying that a piece of dirt is as important as a big house. Even people who seem unimportant to the world are just as important as you and your friends.

When someone dies, churches used to toll their bells with clappers on that made a particular sound that people would recognize right away meant someone had died.

Any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind;
and therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.

The end of the poem tells us that when we hear the bells ringing that someone has died, we don't need to ask who it is. It is as if a part of us died as well because we are all connected to each other.

Although it seems like a sad poem when you first read it, understanding the idea of it – that we are all connected and important – can help you be more concerned about other people. When something happens on the other side of the world, it still affects you. If you feel sad or happy about something that doesn't really seem related to you, this poem explains why that is okay. It's okay to be interested in people you don't know. It's okay to be concerned about people you've never met. You are a part of mankind.

Memorizing it

Can you fill in the next word?

"No Man Is an Island" by John Donne

No man is an _____, entire of _____;
every man is a _____ of the continent,
a part of the _____.

If a clod be _____ away by the _____,
Europe is the _____,
as _____ as if a promontory were,
as well as if a _____ of thy friend's
or of _____ own were.

Any _____ death diminishes me,
because I am _____ in mankind;
and _____ never send to know
for whom the bell _____;
it tolls for _____.

Memorizing it

Can you give the next line? The first letter is given to you.

"No Man Is an Island" by John Donne

No man is an island, entire of itself;

E _____

a part of the main.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,

E _____

as well as if a promontory were,

A _____

or of thine own were.

Any man's death diminishes me,

B _____

and therefore never send to know

F _____

it tolls for thee.