A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING
A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
By John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.
Foundational Annotation Skills

- **Underline** the major points.
- **Circle** keywords or phrases that are confusing or unknown to you.
- Write *margin notes* restating the author’s ideas.
What does valediction mean?
What happens to virtuous men?

As virtuous men pass mildly away, and whisper to their souls to go, whilst some of their sad friends do say, the breath goes now, and some say no.

(John Donne)
What must melt?
What words are words that refer to elements on earth?
Who or what does the “it” refer to?
What type of mourning is the speaker talking about in the title?
What words does Donne use to imply or directly refer to love?
Stanza 3 refers to “moving of th’ earth” and “trepidation of the spheres”; how does the speaker connect these two lines?
The speaker compares gold to that of an expansion. An expansion of what?
What is the compass used to symbolize?
How does the author use the symbol of the compass as an extended metaphor?

A metaphor that compares two seemingly unlike things for several lines or throughout a piece without using like or as.
How does the extended metaphor use the symbol of a circle?
What does finishing the circle mean for the speaker?
What are the underlying themes of this poem? After reading and discussing John Donne’s poem, “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” write a one page analysis that describes the themes of separation and love. Support your discussion with evidence from the text. What is the poet’s message?