

Death, Be Not Proud Literary Device

Writer: John Donne | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Figures of Speech

Apostrophe

An apostrophe is speaking directly to someone who is not present or to something that cannot respond.

Example:

The speaker talks directly to Death like it is a person:

"Death, be not proud..."

But Death is not a person—it cannot talk. This is called an apostrophe.

"Death, be not proud..."

Personification

Personification is giving human qualities to something non-human.

Example:

In this poem, John Donne personifies Death. He talks directly to Death like it is a person. Death is treated like a proud person. The poet says Death thinks he is proud and strong. But the speaker says Death is actually weak and a servant.

Symbols

Sleep: In this poem, sleep is used as a symbol. Sleep is the symbol of the powerlessness and peaceful nature of death. John Donne uses sleep to show that death is not scary. The speaker says that death is just like sleeping. When we sleep, we rest and feel better. So if death is like sleep, then death is also peaceful and helpful, not something to fear.