

John Donne Biography

1572- Born in Bread Street, London, the financial district, to Roman Catholic parents. His father was an ironmonger. Being from a Catholic family, he was, at the time, part of a problematic persecuted minority.

1576- Following his father's death, his mother remarried- to an affluent doctor, also a Papist.

October 1584- he matriculated at Oxford at the age of 12 for 3 years, along with his brother, Henry, to avoid taking the oath of allegiance.

1587- Transferred to Trinity College, Cambridge. He continued his education here, but took no degree because as a Roman Catholic, he could not swear the required oath of allegiance to the Queen.

1591- Law student in London at the age of 19.

May 6th 1592- Admitted to Lincoln's Inn. He was a frequenter of theatres, taverns and brothels of Bankside. His biographer, John Stubbs, describes this as a time of 'lonely promiscuity'. This was also when he began to write his first poems.

1593- Brother Henry sent to the tower and arrested as a religious subversive. He dies in this year in the tower under torture.

c. 1594-1596- Foreign travel. He travelled in Spain and Italy, returning to London to study law.

June 1596- Foreign service with the Earl of Essex

August 1597- The Azores Expedition (The Islands Voyage)

1598-1602- secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton

c. 1590-1601- Songs and Sonnets composed

c. 1590-1608- Problemes and Paradoxes composed

December 1601- he secretly married Anne More, who also had a full Renaissance education. His next ten years were spent living in poverty. He wrote, studied and produced prose works of theology, canon law and anti-Catholic polemics, and composing love lyrics, religious poetry and complimentary and funerary verses for his patrons.

February 1601/02- Imprisoned in the Fleet by Sir George More

April 1602- marriage ratified (confirms the union of the couple)

1602-1604- residence with Sir Francis Wooley at Pyrford

1605-1609- residence at Mitcham

c.1605-1607- employed by Sir Thomas Morton

1608- Biathanatos composed (published 1644)