

John Donne's Life: A Timeline

- 1572 John Donne is born to a Catholic family in London.
- 1576 Donne's father (also named John Donne) dies.
- 1583 Starts at Hart Hall (now Herford College) Oxford
- 1586 Starts university education at Cambridge
He does not get a degree because he is Roman Catholic and will not take the "Oath of Supremacy."
- 1591 Begins training to be a barrister.
- 1592 Receives a large inheritance, spends much of it on books, travel, and—*ahem*—loose living.
- 1593 Queen Elizabeth I issues "An act for Restraining Popish Recusants." Donne's brother Henry is arrested for harboring a Catholic priest, dies in Newgate Prison.

Throughout the 1590s, Donne has a military career, travels to Spain and Italy, appears to be positioning himself for a successful career in diplomacy or other government service.
- 1598 Becomes Chief Secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Keeper of the Great Seal.
Socially, politically, financially, his star is on the rise. Also, he is probably Church of England by now, or he wouldn't have gotten the post.
- 1601 Donne secretly marries Anne More, Egerton's niece. This infuriates Egerton, derails Donne's career.

*John and Anne Donne live in financial straits for much of their marriage. John works as a lawyer, later as a clergyman, also writes poetry and theology. Also, he is a member of Parliament (in a very small way).

Meanwhile, Anne has twelve babies in sixteen years. Two babies are stillborn, five die in before adulthood.*
- 1609 Anne's father relents, finally gives Anne's dowry to the Donnes. This helps the financial strain.
- 1610 Donne's anti-Catholic polemic *Pseudo-Martyr* pleases King James I and opens new possibilities for patronage
- 1615 Receives honorary doctorate from Cambridge, becomes royal chaplain to James I.
- 1617 Anne Donne dies in childbirth.
- 1618 Donne becomes Chaplain to James Hay, Viscount Doncaster, travels with him to Germany for two years.
- 1621 Appointed Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. His sermons begin to attract large audiences.
- 1623 Suffers a near-fatal illness (typhus?)
- 1624 Becomes Vicar of St. Dunstan-in-the-West in London
- 1627 Becomes Prolocutor to King Charles I
- 1631 Donne dies, 31 March