

# The Ultimate Study Guide for Ben Jonson's "On My First Son"

Ben Jonson's poem "On My First Son" is a heartfelt expression of grief and loss. In this study guide, we will delve into the themes, emotions, and literary devices that make this poem a powerful piece of literature. Whether you are a student studying Jonson's works or simply a poetry enthusiast, this guide will provide you with valuable insights and analysis.

## to Ben Jonson and "On My First Son"

Ben Jonson, a prominent English playwright and poet of the 17th century, is best known for his satirical comedies and masques. However, "On My First Son" is a departure from his usual style, as it is a deeply personal and reflective elegy written upon the death of his first son, Benjamin.

Throughout the poem, Jonson explores themes of grief, regret, and acceptance. The emotions conveyed in "On My First Son" are universal, as they capture the experience of losing a loved one and the impact it has on one's perspective of life.



## Study Guide for Ben Jonson's On My First Son

by Course Hero ([Print Replica] Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 7911 KB

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Screen Reader : Supported



## Key Themes Explored

**1. Grief and Loss:** The central theme of "On My First Son" is the intense grief and sorrow experienced by Jonson upon losing his son. The poem serves as an outlet for the poet to express his devastation and come to terms with his loss.

**2. Father-Son Relationship:** Jonson explores the complex bond between a father and son, highlighting the love and pride he felt for his child. The tragedy of losing his son at a young age intensifies the emotions associated with this relationship.

**3. Regret and Remorse:** Embedded within the poem is a sense of regret. Jonson reflects on his own role as a father and expresses remorse for perhaps not appreciating his son enough during his short life.

**4. Acceptance and Redemption:** The final lines of the poem reveal a shift in Jonson's perspective, as he recognizes that his son is in a better place and has been spared the hardships of life. This acceptance brings a sense of redemption and peace to the poet.

## Analyzing the Poem

Ben Jonson employs various literary devices to convey his emotions and ideas in "On My First Son." Let's take a closer look at these techniques and how they contribute to the overall impact of the poem.

**1. Metaphor:** The poem's opening line, "Farewell, thou child of my right hand," serves as a metaphor for Jonson's son. It suggests the deep bond between the father and son, emphasizing the tremendous loss Jonson feels.

**2. Personification:** Jonson personifies Death as a person who claims his son, highlighting the inevitability and impartiality of death.

**3. Allusion:** Jonson alludes to biblical references, such as Mary's mourning for her son, Jesus, in order to further express his own grief and create a sense of universality in his anguish.

**4. Repetition:** The repetition of the phrase "Oh, could I lose all father, now," reinforces Jonson's despair and longing for release from the pain of his loss.

## **Understanding the Structure and Form**

"On My First Son" follows a distinct rhyme scheme (ababccdd). This consistent rhyme scheme adds to the poem's musicality and creates a sense of order amidst the chaos of grief. Additionally, the poem consists of 12 lines, which is a nod to the traditional sonnet structure but with a slight deviation.

The poem is also written in iambic pentameter, a rhythmic pattern that adds to its lyrical quality. The consistent use of this meter enhances the emotional impact of the poem, as it mirrors the natural flow of speech and adds a musicality to the verses.

## **Good Study Questions to Consider**

1. How does Jonson's use of metaphors contribute to the overall meaning of the poem?
2. What references and allusions does Jonson employ in "On My First Son" to convey his grief?
3. In what ways does the rhyme scheme and meter enhance the emotional impact of the poem?

4. How does the progression of emotions depicted in the poem reflect Jonson's journey towards acceptance and redemption?

"On My First Son" by Ben Jonson is a deeply moving elegy that explores themes of grief, loss, and acceptance. Through its heartfelt language, powerful metaphors, and universal themes, this poem continues to resonate with readers centuries after its composition.

This study guide has provided an in-depth analysis of the poem, shedding light on its key themes, literary devices, and structural components. By closely examining the work of a renowned poet like Jonson, we gain a deeper appreciation for the artistry and emotional power of poetry.

So, if you are embarking on a journey to understand Ben Jonson's work or simply eager to explore the beauty of poetic expression, "On My First Son" is a remarkable piece to immerse yourself in.



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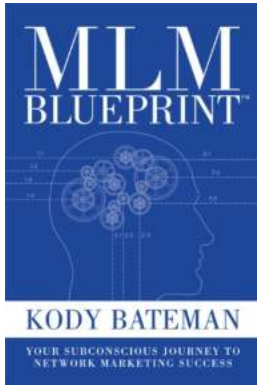
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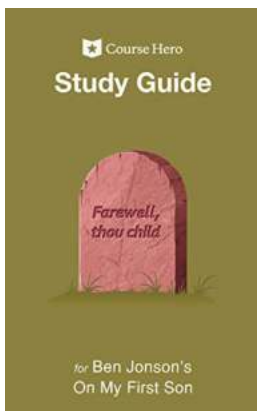
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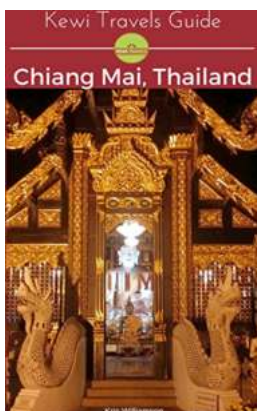
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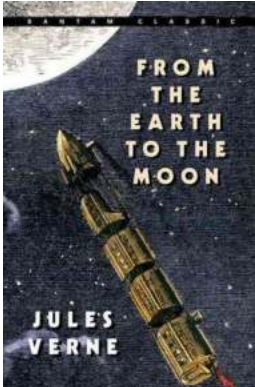
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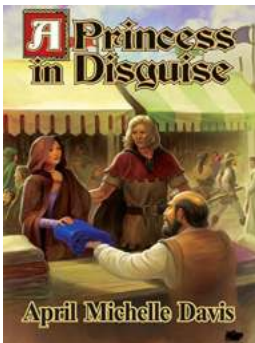
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