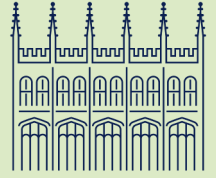




MELANCHOLY

A New Anatomy

Exhibition Trail



BODLEIAN
LIBRARIES

What is the *Anatomy of Melancholy*?

Robert Burton wrote *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621. This book was a wide-ranging investigation into a condition that we would describe as depression. He considers the causes and cures of melancholy from medical and religious perspectives. The exhibition explores Burton's ideas and their legacy.

This trail explores the themes of the exhibition by looking at a few of the items on display.



Robert Burton's 'The Anatomy of Melancholy'.
Antiq.d.E. 1638.2

Diet Rectified

Burton thought that diet was important and gave advice on healthy eating.

1. Find some examples of foods Burton thought we should eat or avoid.

Foods to eat

Foods to avoid

.....
.....

.....
.....

2. How do Burton's ideas compare to modern advice about our diet?

.....
.....

Reading and Writing

Burton spent his life in Oxford surrounded by books so it isn't surprising that he found reading and writing helpful.

3. Use the displays to find out what is meant by these words:

Bibliotherapy:

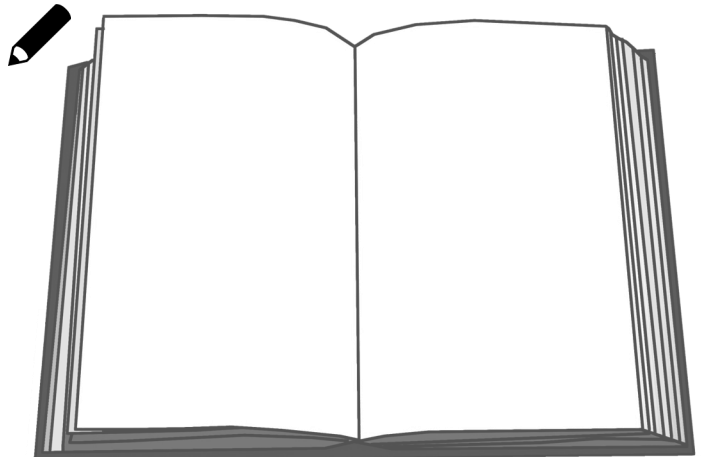
.....

Scriptotherapy

.....

4. Do you have a favourite book that you find helpful or comforting?

Do you keep a journal or diary?




Spiritual Physick

As a clergyman of the Church of England, religion was at the heart of Burton's ideas about melancholy and mental health. The world's religions include meditative and prayerful practices and these have also influenced modern secular ideas about mental health.



'Perfection of Wisdom' 11th century Buddhist manuscript. MS. Sansk. a 7

 Find an example of a religious text or artwork designed for meditation, contemplation or prayer.

5. Which religion is it from?

Item:.....

.....

Religion:



Islamic Paradise Garden, 17th-18th century, MS. Ouseley add. 170, fol. 1b


Air Rectified

Burton was enthusiastic about the value of a change of air and the use of gardens and green spaces. He wrote that "To walk amongst orchards, gardens, ... green thickets, arches, groves, lawns, rivulets, fountains ... must needs be a delectable recreation."

 Find this image of an Islamic 'paradise garden'.

6. Which of Burton's garden features can you find?

- Tree
- Hedge
- Lawn
- Stream
- Fountain

 7. What else would you include in your paradise garden?

Sleeping and Waking

Burton believed that good quality sleep was so important that it could be "sufficient remedy of itself without any other physic". As well as artistic responses to our experience of sleep, or lack of sleep, the display includes several supposed aids to sleep, some more helpful than others.

 Choose one aid to good sleep from the display.


8. How successful do you think it would be?

.....

Mirth, Music and Merry Company

Burton thought that time spent with friends, laughter and particularly music were helpful in overcoming melancholy.

During lockdown, people were unable to socialise as they would normally but found other ways to 'meet' and stay entertained, such as streaming music, making video calls, and taking part in online challenges.

 9. Do you think Burton would have approved of this?



Detail from portrait of Robert Burton by Gilbert Jackson, 1635. With the kind permission of the Kings Hall and College of Brasenose.