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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | DO NOT GO GENTLE… |
| **Summary:** Dylan Thomas crafts a powerful meditation on our attitudes to death and its inevitability in the form of a villanelle; in a sharp final twist, he reveals that it is his own father whom he is urging to battle and resist the soft embrace of death. | | | | **Biographical:** Dylan Thomas was born in Wales in 1914. His interest in poetry flourished in the wake of his failure in other subjects at school. He moved to London and a life of fame by his early twenties; unfortunately, alcohol abuse and a tumultuous relationship took their toll. He died in 1953 at the age of just 39, though not before publishing his masterful play for voices, *Under Milkwood*. |
| **St 1:** The poet launches his plea to resist death in the imperative voice. | | *“that good night” “rage, rage” (repetition / assonance)* | The euphemism of night as a metaphor for death contrasts with the poet’s passion. |
| **St 2:** The poet muses on the frustrations of the wise. | | *“dark is right” “forked no lightning”* | Acceptance is contrasted with metaphor’s implication that their words had no impact. | **Interpretation:** The villanelle, with its very strict rhyme scheme (only allowing two rhymes) and alternating repetition of whole lines is a highly demanding form. However, Thomas succeeds brilliantly in using its echoes to evoke the denial and desperation of the son in the face of his father’s impending death.  The poem’s power lies in its ability to meditate in an abstract and lyrical manner about the inevitability of death but also to forge a deeply personal and emotional climax in its final stanza.  The poem’s structure is drawn through the divisions of the different archetypes and how each deals with death – whether wise, good, wild or grave. Ultimately, all of their efforts are in vain at some level and this makes the sustained protest in the last quatrain all the more moving.  The poem was written in 1947: in fact, Thomas’ own father was not to die for another five years; tragically, his son was only to outlive him by a mere year before succumbing to the ravages of alcoholism. |
| **St 3**. The poet muses on the anxieties of the good. | | *“waves… frail deeds… danced”* | The imagery here emphasises beauty but also ephemerality – the acts will not last. |
| **St 4:** The poet muses on the final realization of the carefree. | | *“caught and sang the sun”* | Once more dramatic irony pervades this stanza – as the carefree realize their fate. |
| **St 5:** The poet muses on the insights of the grave men. | | *“blinding sight”* | Another oxymoron / paradox expressing the sudden way in which death teaches us. |
| **St 6:** The poet reveals the narratee as his own father then repeats his plea. | | *“you, my father”* | The direct address and revelation of the narratee add great emotional punch. |
| **Partner poems?** | | *“bless, curse”* (caesura) | The combination of these antithetical reactions implies the son’s desperation. |  |