"Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"

By Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) was a Welsh poet famous for several of his works, including “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” (1952). Thomas was popular during his own time; his use of imagery and rhythm in poetry made his poetry widely accessible. As you read, try to decipher the message of this poem.

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieve it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

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Text-Based Questions:

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is the speaker? Who is the speaker addressing? Support your answer with evidence.

2. What is the speaker’s message to wise men? Good men? Wild men? Grave men?

3. According to the speaker, why don’t wise men “go gentle into that good night”? Support your answer with evidence.

4. What does the night symbolize? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
5. Explain the refrain, “do not go gentle into that good night.” What does it mean to “go gentle”?

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6. What is the rhyme scheme of this poem, and what is the effect of rhyme?

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7. Explain the line, “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.” What do you think is the speaker’s message in this line?

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8. What is the effect of repetition on this poem? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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Discussion Questions:

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. What is the author’s message about death?

2. According to the speaker, how should a person face death? Explain your answer in detail.

3. Based on your own experience, how do people face death?
Suggested Text Pairings:

“An Obstacle” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Poem)
Dylan Thomas urges his reader to be strong in the face of death. In Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s poem “An Obstacle,” she urges us to remain strong when facing everyday obstacles. Gilman was writing as a feminist during a time when it was not socially acceptable to identify as such. Pair “Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night” with “An Obstacle” to spark a discussion about life, death, and resilience. Find “An Obstacle” at CommonLit.org (Resilience→ How does a person overcome adversity?→ 9th-8th Grade).