

Lesson Name : 22

Lesson Title : Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

Course Name : English 2 Part 3 [Honors]

Task Id : 56528764

Course Id : 15021



Essential Instruction



A picture of Swansea, the town where Dylan Thomas was born.

Please read Dylan Thomas's "[Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night](#)."

It is a good idea to use your digital notebook to keep notes on new vocabulary and definitions that you may need to reference later.

### Themes in Poetry

For today's lesson, let's discuss **themes**. You've seen these before in novels, but what about poems? A **theme** is a central idea around which the other main elements of a written work are built. It is the message, moral, or lesson, that comes through. It is the main idea or underlying meaning around which the elements of the work exist. A **theme** is often about life, society, or human nature. Sometimes a writer will intentionally put a **theme** into his or her work; sometimes it is unintentional, but comes through due to the writer's views on a subject, what the characters do, how the plot unfolds, what the setting is like, what conflicts are present in the work, or anything else that happens in the work that refers to a universal idea.

Some common examples of **theme** include love, friendship, innocence (or loss of innocence), war, nature, religion (or spirituality or faith), the darker side of the human mind, justice. You can see from the examples that a **theme** is often very broad and often something that will be familiar to many cultures

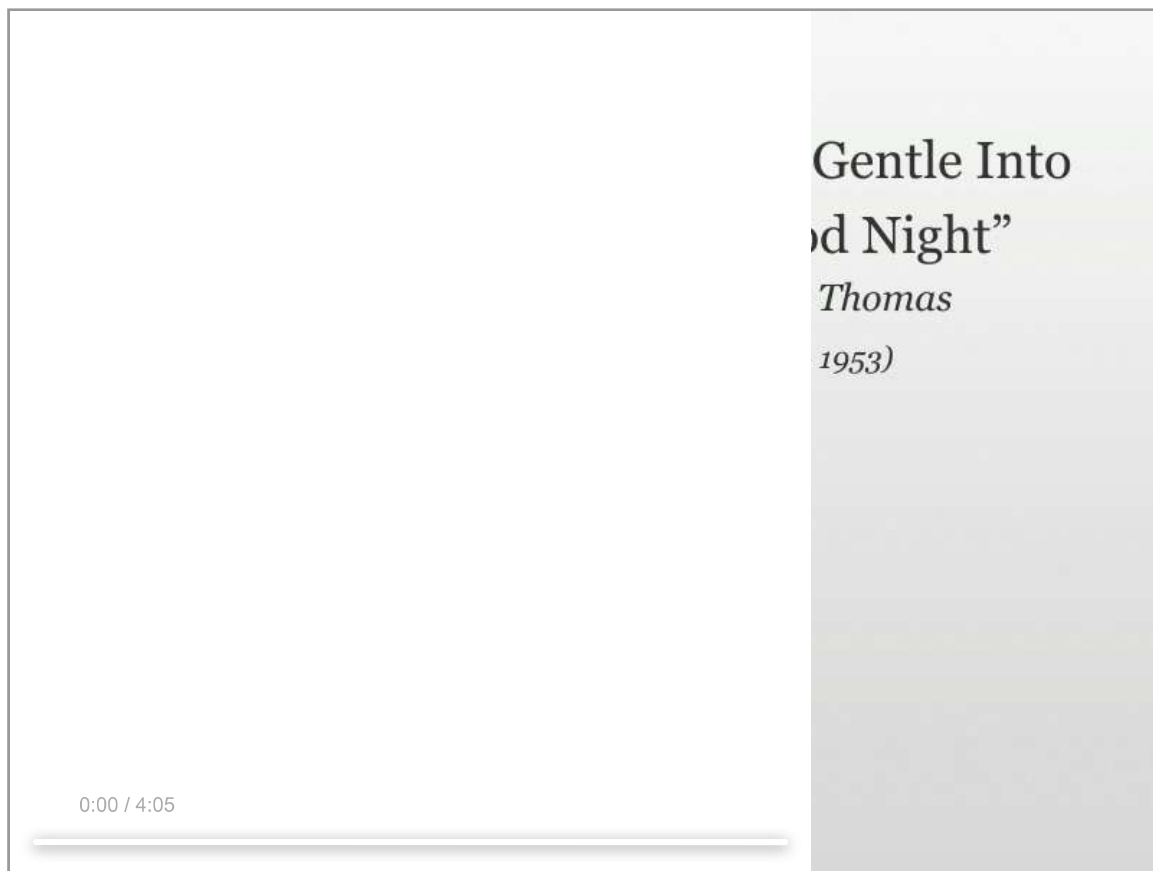
In Dylan Thomas's poem "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," what do you think the **theme** is? Start by determining what the main idea is. Say to yourself: "This poem is about \_\_\_\_." The first step to finding **theme** in a poem is to summarize it. In a novel, you might look for repeated concepts, imagery, or objects. A poem, though, often does not have as much room to do this, so it might be more difficult to identify its **theme**. Luckily, this particular poem does contain repeated words and phrases. Consider these lines:

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.

Here, the phrase “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Rage, rage against the dying of the light” are both repeated. The “good night” to which Thomas refers is death. He is telling his audience to fight death. This poem was written for Dylan Thomas’ sick father. Can you see how the **theme** of fighting death comes through his words?

### Understanding Semantics

**Semantics** is the study of meanings and the relationships of meanings. Think about the word “rage.” What concepts or meanings come to your mind when you think of this word? Is it anger, a temper-tantrum, fighting, or the meaning of the word when used to mean “all the rage?” What word has a meaning that comes closest to “rage?” What word has a meaning that is the furthest from “rage?” Now, think of other words that can have multiple meanings and interpretations in Dylan Thomas’ “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night.”



[Open Video in New Tab](#)



### Vocabulary

Understanding the words used in a poem can aid your understanding of the poem itself. Here are some words from Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night":

1. **rave** – verb – to roar or rage
2. **forked** – adj. – zigzagged or split into several paths or lengths
3. **frail** – adj. – weak
4. **rage** – verb – show or feel violent anger
5. **grieve** – verb – to feel grief or great sorrow
6. **grave** – adj. – very serious
7. **blaze**: to burn brightly
8. **gay** – adj. – happy
9. **fierce** – adj. – menacingly wild, savage, or hostile