Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night and Rhetorical Device Graphic Organizer

Section Objective:

- Understand, analyze, and compare universal themes; and compare themes across genres
- Understand word origins, understand word analogies, create semantic charts, and understand multiple meaning words
- Make predictions, make inferences, and synthesize ideas from different sources
- Connect literature and the news, and distinguish fact from opinion

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night by Dylan Thomas

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

Dylan Thomas (1914 – 1953) was a Welsh poet, imbued with the lyricism his country is famous for. He was an alcoholic, though it does not seem to have affected his capacity to write. Primarily a poet, he also penned short stories and plays, the most famous of which was *Under Milk Wood*. He often read his own work and these recordings are available at many sites online. He died suddenly at the young age of 39 but left behind an extraordinary body of work. He was such an icon that Bob Dylan renamed himself in his memory.

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

Dylan Thomas wrote this poem as his father lay dying, and addressed it to his father, though in all probability his father did not ever see it. The poet remembered his father as a vigorous, hearty man, and it pained and angered him to see him die. The poem is an ex-

hortation to him not to die tamely but to fight death, to refuse to die. While the poet knows that death is inevitable to all, he also does not want people to give in to death. Wise, good, wild and serious men–all of them refuse to die easily but fight against it, especially if they believe that life can be lived differently, if they still have something not offer, or if they have some work unfinished. His father, too, must rage against dying.

Two memorable lines are the ones most often repeated in the poem – "Do not go gentle into that good night," and "Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Rhetorical Devices

The use of the form of the poem itself is ironical, which is a rhetorical fancy. A *villanelle is* a French poetic form usually used for simple and light verse. It is ironical that in this case it is used to express anger against death, a topic that is neither simple nor light.

The most obvious rhetorical device he uses is a euphemism, referring to death as sleep or "good night."

Another rhetorical device, related to "good night" is a pun, which is a play on words. It is a device rarely used in poetry. Dylan Thomas puns on the phrase "good night" and on "grave," which only accentuates the seriousness of the subject.

Alliteration: Repetition of the initial consonant sounds beginning several words in sequence

> "Veni, vidi, vici." Julius Caesar (I came, I saw, I conquered.)

Assonance: Repetition of the same vowel sounds in words close to each other

> That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

Anadiplosis: ("doubling back") The rhetorical repetition of one or several words; specifically, repetition of a word that ends one clause at the beginning of the next

> "Men in great place are thrice servants: servants of the sovereign or state; servants of fame; and servants of business." Francis Bacon

Analogy: A comparison of two dissimilar things or ideas in order to suggest some similarity. In oratory, an analogy may make use of metaphor and simile

> However, the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe around the right and rear of the Armies of the north. Eight or nine armored divisions, each of about four hundred armored vehicles of different kinds, but carefully assorted to be complementary and divisible into small self-contained units, cut off all communications between us and the main French Armies. It severed our own communications for food and ammunition, which ran first to Amiens and afterwards through Abbeville, and it shore its way up the coast to Boulogne and Calais, and almost to Dunkirk. Winston Churchill

Anaphora: The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses or lines

> This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise,
> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,
> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> Richard II – Act II Scecne 1–William Shakespeare

Antistrophe: Repetition of the same word or phrase at the end of successive clauses

> The white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. – Malcom X

Antithesis: Opposition, or contrast of ideas or words in a balanced or parallel construction

> "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more."
> Brutus in: "Julius Caesar" by William Shakespeare

Apostrophe: A sudden turn from the general audience to address a specific group or person or personified abstraction absent or present

> "To what green altar, O mysterious priest, / Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies, / And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?"– Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats

Chiasmus: Two corresponding pairs arranged not in parallels (a-b-a-b) but in inverted order (a-b-b-a); from shape of the Greek letter chi (X)

> "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." Shakespeare, Macbeth

> "Renown'd for conquest, and in council skill'd."
> Marcus Tullius Cicero

Climax: Arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of ascending power. Often the last emphatic word in one phrase or clause is repeated as the first emphatic word of the next

> "One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
> Tennyson, Ulysses

Euphemism: Substitution of an agreeable or at least non-offensive expression for one whose plainer meaning might be harsh or unpleasant

> Passing on used instead of death.

Hyperbole: Exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect

> Why does a boy who's fast as a jet
> Take all day—and sometimes two—
> To get to school?
> —John Ciardi, Speed Adjustments

Irony: Expression of something that is contrary to the intended meaning; the words say one thing but mean another

> Famous lawyers and politicians call themselves "simple country lawyers."

Metaphor: Implied comparison achieved through a figurative use of words; the word is used not in its literal sense, but in one analogous to it

> *Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage. Shakespeare, in Macbeth

> *From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Winston Churchill

Onomatopoeia: The use of a word that makes or refers to an actual sound

> "The moan of doves in immemorial elms, And murmuring of innumerable bees." Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Oxymoron: Apparent paradox achieved by the juxtaposition of words which seem to contradict one another

> Deafening silence

Paradox: An assertion seemingly opposed to common sense, but that may yet have some truth in it

> "War is peace."
> "Freedom is slavery."
> "Ignorance is strength."
> (George Orwell, 1984)

Parallelism: Identical sentence or phrase patterns used to express ideas that are closely related

> "…Whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight on the landing grounds; we shall fight in the fields and in the streets…" Winston Churchill

Personification: Attribution of personality to an impersonal thing

> "England expects every man to do his duty." Lord Nelson

Pleonasm: Use of superfluous or redundant words, often enriching the thought

> *"Let us gather together."
>
> *Ears pierced while you wait!

Repetition: A rhetorical strategy that emphasizes ideas for clarity or emotional effect

> "We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills;" Winston Churchill

Simile: An explicit comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as'

> "While the evening is spread out against the sky,
> Like a patient etherized upon a table"
> T.S. Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Syllepsis: Use of a word with two others, with each of which it is understood differently

> He lost the bet and his temper.

Tautology: Repetition of an idea in a different word, phrase, or sentence

> "With malice toward none, with charity for all."
> President Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural

Graphic organizer

Complete the table below to identify rhetorical devices that are used with such great effect in this poem. Add rows as necessary to accommodate multiple examples of a rhetorical device.

Rhetorical device	Quotations from the poem
Metaphor	
Metonymy	
Oxymoron	
Paradox	
Personification	