

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# From A Son to a Father, a Reading of Dylan Thomas' 'Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night'

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**Abstract:**

Born in Swansea, Wales, in 1914, Dylan Thomas began writing poetry early. It is remarkable that some of Dylan's most famous poems including "And death shall have no dominion" and "Before I knocked" -were written when he was still a teenager. His story caught the attention of literary geniuses like T.S. Eliot, George Grigson, and Stephen Spender, who helped him publish his first book of poetry with eighteen poems at the young age of 20. Unlike his contemporaries, Thomas' poems are not concerned with social issues. He seems more concerned with the physical process of life and death and blends the ancient and the modern in remarkably unique ways.

**Keywords:** Gentle, rage, familial ties, death, anger, wisdom.

**Aim of the Paper**

The paper intends to analyze **various** aspects of the poem 'Do not go gentle into that night' to study the themes taken up in the poem, the background of its publication, and the autobiographical connection the verse explicitly indicates.

**The Autobiographical Connect**

The poem was written in 1947 when Thomas was in Florence with his family. First published in 1951 and then in 1952, the poem touches upon a delicate topic- death.

Thomas wrote the poem for his father to tell him that there is so much more for him here, living, to do. The only way to deter death is through fury and frenzy. The title discloses the poet's thoughts about death and the importance of fighting to live life to the fullest.

Dylan laments the confrontation of his father's loss of health and strength and urges him to struggle against death instead of meekly giving in to it. The question of death in old age is raised in the poem, but the focus is the grief and rebellion of the poet as he wrestles against the face of death or "dying of the light." It also focuses on the exertion of frustration at the natural order of things we are powerless to change. There is an explicit nature of urgency in the speaker's tone and the raw energy of emotions underlying it, which makes it one of the most influential poems of all time.

The poem begins with a symbolic reference to the end of human life.

"Close of the day, dying of the light."

There is also a reference to meteors, which indicates that the poet has extended his imagination to outer space. The structure of the poem is persuasive.

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**Themes explored**

**Anger**

The poem explores various themes, anger being one of the most prominent. Anger is a heated, unreasoning emotion, and Dylan Thomas is too clever to reason. The anger emanates from frustration and disappointment experienced by wise men, good men, wild men, and grave men, all of whom have been in vigorous pursuit of something in their lives. He advises men to 'choose rage, but these men do not find their popularity by choice.

Although not wholly satisfying, anger is considered to be better than sadness.

Dylan Thomas talks about the human condition of life. Life can be filled with myriad activities, but the thought of death can turn even the noblest of these into distractions that are easily forgotten as death approaches. Hence all humans react to 'death' in a very emotional manner.

**Wisdom**

The wisdom of wise men is another theme that Dylan talks about. The firm, intelligent and creative men deal with life and death. He stresses the need to constantly struggle to keep ideas, actions, and our life afloat.

**Familial Ties**

Through life and death, struggle and frustration, Dylan Thomas touches upon the next theme of familial ties and family relationships. Thomas' love for his father is what prompted him to urge his father to keep fighting against all odds. Familial bonds generate and bring us hope and resilience, which other ties may not be able to produce. Aimed at the sick, the elderly, and the dying, in particular his father, Thomas encourages them to fight bravely against death. The poet tries to convince his father to fight and not give up easily. He urges the elderly to resist the oncoming darkness of death passionately. Intelligent people understand that death is inevitable, but one must not accept death until one has said something startling, revolutionary, or powerful enough to startle the world.

Seeing the last moments of their lives pass by like a final wave, good people mourn that they could not accomplish more.

Daring people who have lived in the moment and embraced life to the fullest, metaphorically catching a joyful ride across the sky, realize too late that the sun is leaving them far behind and that they must die.

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

Serious people realize with sudden clarity that even those who have lost their sight can, like meteors, be full of light and happiness.

All, for reasons unique to them, refuse to accept death and resist the oncoming gloom and darkness of their death. Addressing his dad, Thomas says that his dad is close to death, as if on the peak of a mountain. He urges him passionately to resist the darkness of his death.

**Conclusion**

His purpose is to show his father that all men face the same end, but they fight for life nonetheless. The poem abounds in imagery, and the form and structure of the poetry are flawless and commendable. It consists of five sestets and a concluding quatrain. Dylan Thomas successfully conveys the poem's central theme with the resounding optimistic anthem of fighting and not accepting death gently. The strong message repeated four times in the six verses is "Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

**References**

Thomas, Dylan 'Do not go gentle into that good night.'