

“Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” Activity

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15377>

Poem: The approach to reading poetry differs from prose. Read the poem at least 2 times.

1. Look at the title – does it represent a theme or a symbol?
2. Next skim the poem looking for unfamiliar words (get familiar with those words).
3. Read the poem as if it were prose. Pause only at the punctuation not at end of lines.
4. Summarize what you think the poem is about.
5. Read it a second time.
6. Paraphrase each stanza or break it down in think-sized pieces – this is the time you pay attention to those literary devices so commonly used by poets.
7. Look at the title again and make a connection to the poem.

Dylan Thomas wrote the poem about his dying father. His father had been a robust, militant man throughout his life. When he was in his eighties, he became blind and weak. Thomas was disturbed watching his once virulent father become “soft” and “gentle.” In the poem, Thomas is rousing his father to continue being fierce as he had once been.

*Be on the lookout for the following literary devices:
(Define them in your own words!)*

Form of poem villanelle – a 19-line poem, originally French, that uses only two rhymes and consists of five three-line stanzas and a final quatrain. The first and third lines of the first stanza are alternately repeated as a refrain that closes the following stanzas, and are joined as a final couplet of the quatrain.

Metaphor

Pun

Personification

Metonymy – an attribute of something is used to stand the thing itself,
e.g. “laurels” when it stands for “glory” or “brass” when it stands for
“military officers”)

Hyperbole

Simile

Paradox

Oxymoron

Think about the quotation from the novel and its relation to the poem.

“Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.”
--Morrie Schwartz, *Tuesdays with Morrie*

Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

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 grieved 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.

-- *Dylan Thomas*

Multiple Guess

- _____ 1. What kind of men have “caught and sang the sun in flight”?
- a. grave men
 - b. good men
 - c. wild men
 - d. wise men
- _____ 2. Which of the following is not used to refer to death in the poem?
- a. forked lightning
 - b. good night
 - c. dying of the light
 - d. close of day
- _____ 3. What does the speaker want to hear?
- a. a scream
 - b. a sigh
 - c. a prayer
 - d. a curse
- _____ 4. Whom is the speaker of the poem addressing?
- a. his friend
 - b. his father
 - c. his mother
 - d. his brother
- _____ 5. Whose eyes could “blaze like meteors” even though they are near death?
- a. grave men
 - b. wild men
 - c. good men
 - d. wise men

- _____ 6. What type of men does the speaker say know that “dark is right”?
- a. wise men
 - b. good men
 - c. grave men
 - d. wild men
- _____ 7. What should old age do according to the speaker?
- a. bless and cry
 - b. blaze and burn
 - c. curse and blaze
 - d. burn and rave
- _____ 8. What kind of men cries because their deeds are frail?
- a. grave men
 - b. wild men
 - c. good men
 - d. wise men

Short Answer

9. Explain why “wild” men grieve.
10. Discuss how death is presented in the poem. Cite details from the poem in your description.
11. Explain what “grave” men realize before they die.
12. Describe the speaker’s attitude towards death in the poem. Cite details from the poem in your description.
13. Explain what “wise” men realize before they die.

14. From your own life experience where do you find wisdom?

15. How does the poem fit the form of the villanelle?

16. Find and quote the hyperbole and explain why it is an effective technique to use in the poem.

17. Cite several metaphors and similes that are used for death. What tone is created by these comparisons?

18. Find an example of a paradox in the poem and explain the paradox.

19. Do the lines “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Rage, rage against the dying of the light” suggest different moods? Explain your answer.

20. “Old age should burn and rave” is an example of metonymy. Defend the statement.

21. Find an example of personification in the poem. What is it?

22. Find an example of a word that is a pun and explain how it is used.

23. Find and write the example of oxymoron found in the poem.

24. How can studying poetry help you improve your own writing style (even if you are never going to write poetry or you don't "like" poetry)?

25. How might Morrie's reaction to the poem be different from Mitch's reaction at this point in the memoir? Write and be prepared to share your thoughts.