Dylan Thomas: Do not go gentle…
Lesson 3

Level: Advanced

Target: Young adult learners, mature learners, literature students

Time: Approx. 90 min

Main aim(s):

- To introduce students to three of Dylan Thomas’ most celebrated poems
- To raise students’ awareness of main themes in English literature
- To promote intercultural discussion and understanding

Subsidiary aim(s):

- To help students expand their vocabulary
- To give students opportunities to develop the four skills
- To give students opportunities to discuss more complex issues
- To give students the opportunity to explore films and plays

Materials:

- Student worksheet
- Access to Jeremy Harmer’s recording of Do not go gentle into that good night. Link: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/dylan-thomas
- Dictionaries
- Optional: pictures of baptisms, weddings, and funerals
- Optional: access to video readings of And death shall have no dominion, A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child In London and Do not go gentle into that good night.
  Link: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/dylan-thomas

Introduction:

This unit is designed to introduce students to Thomas’ poems which focus on the theme of death. We recommend you use it with older learners and consider if your students are mature enough to deal with the topic. The subject is likely to bring religious issues and beliefs to the surface and it is important that students are aware that they should keep an open mind, and that differences in opinion should be expressed respectfully. Focus on the language and ideas in the poems; keep a positive attitude and motivate your students to see this as an opportunity for intercultural exchange.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing (min)</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Differentiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead in and contextualisation to predict vocabulary present in the poems to engage student with complex issues to help with personalisation and individual response to the poems</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>teacher-student</td>
<td>Tell students that the lesson focuses on three of Dylan Thomas’ poems that share a common theme. Pair-work: Students do Task 1 in the worksheet. Give students time to talk about such ceremonies they have attended themselves. Keep the discussion at pair work level: these issues and concepts are more easily communicated to another individual than to the whole class.</td>
<td>Note to the teacher: some students may have experienced personal loss and some may live in conflict zones where death is a daily experience. Be sensitive and use your common sense when dealing with issues in this lesson. Collect some pictures of baptisms, marriages and funerals and use them as visual prompts for the speaking task. If you have access to a classroom computer and projector, find some pictures on the internet, and copy and paste them into PowerPoint slides to make their visualisation easier and more attractive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading to facilitate the reading task to engage students with close reading to provide the opportunity for vocabulary development</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>teacher-student</td>
<td>Ask students to read the information in the box or just tell them about those events in Thomas’ life. Put students in pairs and let them choose between A or B. Students do Task 2 in the worksheet. Allow students some time to check the dictionary if they need it and discuss their answers at the end of the activity. Group feedback. Use the answer key to guide you, but accept variations if your students can convince you that their choice is possible. Use the opportunity to model and drill the pronunciation of the words in the lines.</td>
<td>With lower level groups, you may need to give students more time to consult the dictionary. If you have access to the internet in class, at the end of the activity you can play the audio recordings of the poems. Link to recordings: <a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/dylan-thomas">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/dylan-thomas</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking to develop critical reading skills</td>
<td>05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pair-work: Students do Task 3 in the worksheet. Group feedback. Focus on the lines in the poems. Accept possible interpretations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give students the opportunity to personally respond to the poems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening and reading to listen for detail</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher-student</td>
<td>Contextualise the listening. Students do Task 4 in the worksheet individually and then compare answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>individual work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher-student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking to develop critical reading skills</td>
<td>05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pair-work: Students do Task 5 in the worksheet. Group feedback. Focus on the questions about other poems and poetry in their own language. Give students the opportunity to share information with the whole group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give students the opportunity to personally respond to the poems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language work to raise students’ awareness of how poets use language</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher-student</td>
<td>Refer students to the first lines of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 60. Elicit meaning. Contextualise the activity. Refer students back to the poems. Students do Task 6 in the worksheet individually and then compare their answers. Allow them time to use their dictionaries. Students compare their answers in pairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to improve students’ vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>individual work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher - student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Speaking and consolidation**

| 05 | student-student | A whole lesson talking about death can be quite a depressing experience. Bring your students back and lead them to look at the issue from a more positive perspective. | Find some pictures of movies on the internet and use them to prompt the discussion. A list of films that broach the topic from different angles is detailed below. |

**Homework**

| 05 | teacher-student | Assign the homework. If you think your students are capable of more complex analysis, ask them to link issues in the film to ideas and concepts in the poems. | Choose between paper and pen, or blog versions of the task, but if you go for the electronic one, make sure all your students are capable of doing that. |

**Poems - Suggestions**

- *Come Not, When I am Dead*, by Alfred Tennyson
- *The Lucy Poems*, by William Wordsworth
- *To One Shortly to Die*, by Walt Whitman
- *Funeral Blues*, by W.H. Auden
- *Up-Hill*, by Christina Rossetti
- *Lights Out*, by Edward Thomas

**Films - Suggestions**

- *The Lion King*
- *Dead Poets Society*
- *Meet Joe Black*
- *Schindler’s List*
- *Titanic*
- *The Hunger Games*
- *The Others*
- *Atonement*
- *Four Weddings and a Funeral*
- *Any of the Shakespearean Tragedies*