

Level: Intermediate/B1 onwards

Time: Approx. 80 min

Main aim(s):

- To introduce students to one of Dylan Thomas' most famous poems
- To motivate students to engage with poetry
- To raise students' awareness of how poets use language

Subsidiary aim(s):

- To help students expand their vocabulary
- To give students opportunities to develop the four skills
- To give students opportunities to develop critical reading skills
- To give students the opportunity to do some creative writing

Materials:

- Student worksheet
- Access to the reading of *Fern Hill*. Link: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/dylan-thomas>
- Dictionaries

Introduction:

This unit is designed to introduce students to one of Thomas' most celebrated poems. It gives students the opportunity to gradually engage with the language in the poem and to promote awareness of how poets use language to describe scenes and embed complex ideas in their descriptions. It also gives learners the opportunity to try to employ similar techniques and develop their creative writing.

Procedure

Stage and stage aim(s)	Timing (min)	Interaction	Procedure	Differentiation
<p>Lead in and contextualisation Vocabulary and writing</p> <p>to predict vocabulary present in the poem</p> <p>to help students visualise the scenes described in the poem</p> <p>to possibly recycle previously known vocabulary</p>	15	<p>teacher-student</p> <p>student-student</p> <p>teacher-student</p>	<p>Tell students that the lesson focuses on one of Dylan Thomas' most famous poems and that the pictures are somehow related to similar places and scenes described in the poem.</p> <p>Pair-work: Students do Task 1 in the worksheet. Circulate to monitor and help with language choice if necessary.</p> <p>Ask students to volunteer and read out some of their paragraphs, which describe the images.</p>	<p>Note to the teacher: Although the language in <i>Fern Hill</i> cannot be considered particularly difficult for intermediate level students, the complexity of the line construction and their meaning may prove difficult to interpret. The lesson aims to gently introduce the language used in the poem and help students to visualise the scenes described.</p> <p>If you have access to a classroom computer and projector, copy and paste the pictures into slides to make their visualisation easier and more attractive.</p>
<p>Speaking</p> <p>to help with personalisation and individual response to the poem</p>	05	student-student	Pair-work: Students do Task 2 in the worksheet.	If you have access to a classroom computer and projector, you can find other pictures that could be related to the poem to make the activity even more engaging. Look for pictures of sunrise, moonlight, rivers and streams, farms and fields.
<p>Vocabulary and reading</p> <p>to pre-teach some vocabulary items and phrases in the poem</p> <p>to facilitate the listening task</p> <p>to provide language for later work</p>	10	<p>teacher-student</p> <p>student-student</p> <p>student -student</p>	<p>Tell students to read the lines in the box. Explain that the lines come from the poem they will read later.</p> <p>Students do Task 3 in the worksheet. Allow students some time to discuss their ideas and check the dictionary if need be. Generally, in each sentence there is at least one word that makes the association more likely, but accept variations if your students can convince you that their choice is possible.</p> <p>Group feedback. Use the opportunity to model and drill the pronunciation of the words in the lines.</p>	With lower level groups , you may need to give students more time to consult the dictionary.

<p>Reading and listening</p> <p>to listen for detail</p>	20	<p>teacher-student</p> <p>individual work</p> <p>teacher- student</p>	<p>Contextualise the listening.</p> <p>Students do Task 4 in the worksheet individually and then compare answers.</p> <p>Group feedback.</p>	<p>Link for the recording of the poem:</p> <p>https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/dylan-thomas</p> <p>If you don't have access to the internet in class at all, you can read the poem aloud yourself.</p> <p>With lower level groups you may need to play it more than twice and break the listening into parts. Pause after the gaps to give students time to write</p> <p>With more advanced levels, the listening is unlikely to be problematic but you may still need to pause to give students time to write down the missing lines.</p>
<p>Language work</p> <p>to raise students' awareness of how poets use language</p> <p>to improve students' vocabulary</p>	20	<p>teacher-student</p> <p>individual work</p> <p>teacher-student</p>	<p>Refer students back to the poem. Point out that although the words in the poem are words of everyday use, it is the way the poet puts them together that creates the poetic effect.</p> <p>Students do Task 5 in the worksheet individually and then compare their answers. Allow them time to use their dictionaries.</p> <p>Group feedback.</p>	<p>There is a progression in the difficulty of the items in the table: colours and nouns to describe nature and animals are easier to identify. The categories of passing time and religious connotation require more interpretive effort.</p> <p>With lower level groups, you may need to give an example for the last two categories. It is alright if students cannot get all the words. Discuss them with the group when you give feedback.</p> <p>Students from non-Abrahamic religions may not be able to identify some of the religious connotations of some words in the last category. You may decide to delete the last row of the table or discuss the words with them when giving feedback.</p>
<p>Speaking and consolidation</p> <p>to give students an opportunity to express their personal response to the poem</p>	05	student-student	Pair work: students do Task 6 in the worksheet.	<p>Do not insist on students talking about their childhood. Some students are more than happy to do that, but some may have had traumatic or unpleasant experiences that they are not willing to share. Use your common sense and judgement when dealing with this task.</p>

Homework	05	teacher-student	<p>Try to motivate your students to write this as a poem. However, accept if they feel reluctant to do that. Alternatively, students can write this as a paragraph as they did in Task 1.</p> <p>In both cases, insist on them using some of the vocabulary and phrases from the poem.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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Lesson plan by Chris Lima