

Task 1 - Speaking

Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions with your classmate:

1. Is poetry popular in your country? If so, who are the most popular poets?
2. Have you ever read poetry in English? If so, do you remember the names of any famous poets? Is there a particular poem you like?
3. Do you have any information about Dylan Thomas?



Task 2 - Vocabulary and reading

Work in pairs. Do you know the meaning of the adjectives in the table?

	Words in the text		Words in the text
Ardent		Remarkable	
Charming		Renowned	
Commanding		Turbulent	
Effortless		Unhealthy	
Famous		Unpleasant	

Read a short biography of Dylan Thomas. Find adjectives that are synonyms of the ones above.

Dylan Thomas

Dylan Marlais Thomas was born in Swansea, Wales, on 27 October 1914. The ‘ugly, lovely’ landscape of his hometown on the Welsh coast would be a major influence on all of his work. Although both of his parents were fluent Welsh speakers, Dylan Thomas, perhaps the most popular Welsh poet, was raised to speak only English. English was also the only subject in which he excelled at school.

After leaving school, Dylan Thomas got a job as a journalist and published his first collection of poems at the age of 20. In fact, his most celebrated poems, full of passionate musicality, were written when he was still a teenager. His powerful voice was made for the radio and he frequently recorded for the BBC. Perhaps his most memorable prose work is *Under Milk Wood*, a radio play for the BBC broadcast in 1954, in which the narrator invites the audience to listen to the dreams and thoughts of the inhabitants of a small fictional Welsh fishing village.

Dylan Thomas had a tempestuous life. In 1937 he married Caitlin Macnamara and although they had a problematical relationship, the couple had three children and remained together until his death. He was considered unfit to serve in the armed forces, because of his poor health and was much saddened by seeing his friends going to war. His personal struggles may have contributed to his growing dependence on alcohol, which is also believed to have led to his sudden premature death in 1953 in New York.

Task 3 - Listening

Listen to an interview given by Dylan Thomas's daughter Aeronwy to the BBC in 1983, in which she talks about life with her father. Write true or false.

1. According to Aeronwy, the children did not expect to be with their father. ()
2. Dylan Thomas sometimes asked her to come and read with him. ()
3. Dylan Thomas used to have his meals with his family. ()
4. Dylan Thomas would travel in a separate train carriage from the rest of the family. ()
5. He disliked reading detective stories, by authors like Agatha Christie. ()
6. Aeronwy had happy memories of some Christmases when her father was at home. ()
7. At Christmas Dylan Thomas used to spend the whole day with the children. ()

Task 4 - Reading

Dylan Thomas wrote poems, short stories, film scripts, and radio plays. Match the first lines of some of his most famous pieces to their title.

Do not go gentle into that good night ()	A Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green. The night above the dingle starry, Time let me hail and climb Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
Fern Hill ()	B To begin at the beginning: It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courtiers'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea.
A Child's Christmas in Wales ()	C 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.
Under Milk Wood ()	D ... in those years around the sea-town corner now and out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

Task 5 - Language work

Look at the adjectives in **Task 2** again. Choose appropriate ones to complete the sentences below. There are many different possible answers, try **not** to repeat words.

Dylan Thomas, one of the most (1) poets of the twentieth century, captures a child's eye view of a magical Christmas Day in a small Welsh town.

Fern Hill, is a (2) recreation of the poets' (3) childhood in (4) rural west Wales.

Thomas wrote 'Do not go gentle into that good night' for his dying father. It is one of Thomas's most (5) and (6) poems.

In *Under Milk Wood*, the narrator describes the (7) dreams and innermost thoughts of the inhabitants of a (8) small Welsh fishing village.

Dylan Thomas had a short and (9) life. His drinking habits made him (10) and tainted his personal reputation, but they should not affect our appreciation of his literary talent.

Task 6 - Speaking

Work in small groups. Discuss the following questions with your colleagues:

- Where can you go to find more information about Dylan Thomas?
- If you had to write more information about him and his works, what would you include in your writing?

Homework

Visit www.teachingenglish.org/dylan-thomas
Read the articles and check the links. Create a Dylan Thomas fact file*. Bring it to your next lesson.

*A fact file is a poster where you write short sentences with information about your topic and also include pictures and graphs. Use your creativity!



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