

An evitable end:
dylan thomas's "do
not go gentle"



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Death is often a sensitive subject; after all, most individuals relate death to the loss of someone who was especially important or beloved. In Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night," a strong message is delivered to those who are near death. Thomas demands them to continue to fight their ailments and not accept that death is upon them. Using symbolism as well as strong language, the message to fight death is conveyed to all different types of dying men, including Thomas's father, throughout the poem.

Thomas does not waste any time trying to deliver his message and begins the poem by evoking powerful emotions and creating a sense of urgency. Words such as "burn," "rave," and "rage" in the first stanza induce feelings of anger and desperation that set the tone of the poem from the very beginning. Thomas does not want his audience to take his message lightly. In the second and third lines, death is referred to as the "close of day" and the "dying of the light". These phrases are synonymous with the sunset set and relate life to a single day. While a lifetime may be long, a single day is much too short of a length of time. Thomas feels as if life is too short and believes all people should fight for as long as we can to lengthen it.

For the rest of the poem, Thomas uses each stanza to relate to a different group of men and attempts to show a reason why each should fight to postpone their inevitable end. In the second stanza, wise men are addressed. Though they know that death cannot be avoided, they still don't simply accept it. He states that "because their words have forked no lightning" they resist death. Thomas believes that these wise men are capable of great things, but because life is so short, they make an

insignificant impact if any at all. In the third stanza, good men are focused on. Thomas states " Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay," where he compares life to the sea, good men to waves and good deeds to the dancing waves. Death in this case is when the waves reach the shore and can no longer dance in the ocean. Good men, just like the wise men, had their lives cut too short to accomplish anything worthwhile.

In the fourth stanza, wild men, or rather those who celebrated the world and its beauty, are addressed. Thomas states " And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way," in which he explains how the men miss the day as the sun begins to set, again relating death to a short day. These wild men who were once celebrating the world soon begin to realize that they are dreading the end. In the fifth stanza, grave men are confronted. Thomas states " 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," where he addresses sick men. Despite the grave men being blind or ill, Thomas still expects them to fight death with whatever strength they have left because he believes there are still reasons to live on. More powerful words such as " blinding," " blaze," and " rage" are used to arouse more potent feelings of desperation.

In the last stanza, Thomas addresses his own father, revealing the motive behind the poem. The " sad height" he mentions refers to his father being on the verge of death. Thomas states " Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray," showing his despair and concern for his father. He begs his father to fight, though seeing him fight this battle and in so much pain is

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both a blessing and a curse. Though, the author states how he would much rather see his father fight instead of giving into death. At the end of the last stanza, Thomas repeats both lines that had been the last lines of each stanza, stating " Do not go gentle into that good night. / Rage, rage against the dying of the light," which, again, shows how desperate he was to have his message reach his father.

Though some people may give into death without a fight because death is inevitable, Thomas emphasizes the importance of extending your life as much as you can throughout the poem. The use of literary devices emphasized the importance of his message being conveyed, so that the audience may take in Thomas's message and be inspired to live on. Though life may be short and death unavoidable, fighting death can make life longer in any case.