# A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London

## Lesson 4

### Overview

* Examine language and imagery in the poem.

### Resources

* Word document: KS4 ARTM Learner Resource sheets
* PowerPoint presentation: KS4 ARTM L4 Presentation

### Suggested procedure

1. Introduce the lesson’s objective, then Task 1:

1. In pairs, make a note of words you would use in a poem about the death of a child. You may also want to consider words you have seen in other poems about the death of a child.

2. What words does Dylan Thomas use in this poem to describe the child’s death? (Look at Stanzas 3 and 4 in particular.) *(The majesty and burning of the child’s death; deep with the first dead; robed in the long friends …)*

1. Remind learners of the title of the poem and introduce Task 2:
2. **In pairs**, look again at the **title** of the poem. What do you think is the **key word** in the title?
3. Look through the poem and find any other words and phrases which demonstrate the defiant **negative attitude** of the poet towards mourning the child.

(Stanza 1: *Never***;**Stanza 2: *in the least*; Stanza 3: *I shall not murder… nor blaspheme,* Stanza 4: *no other*)

1. Introduce Dylan Thomas’s religious background and the concept that his work was influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition (Slide 4 KS4 ARTM L4 Presentation).
2. Move on to Task 3, which requires learners to look back at Stanza 2 and 3 to look for allusions to the **Judeo-Christian tradition**.
3. Introduce Slide 6 and then Task 4 on Slide 7.
* In pairs, look for references to the **natural world** in the poem.

After learners have listed the references: *bird beast and flower fathering; the sea; the water bead; (the ear of corn); my salt seed; the grains beyond age, the unmourning water of the riding Thames*, you may choose to draw attention to the fact that many of these refer to water.

1. Introduce Slide 8 (Repetition of **language patterns**) and then Task 5 on Slide 9.

In pairs, look for: Words ending in –**ing** in Stanza 1: *mankind* ***making*** *bird beast and flower* ***fathering*** *and all* ***humbling*** *(darkness); the last light* ***breaking****; the sea* ***tumbling*** *in harness.*

The pattern **the … of the ….** in Stanzas 2, 3 and 4: *the round Zion of the water bead; the synagogue of the ear of corn; the shadow of a sound; the least valley of sackcloth; the majesty and burning of the child’s death; the stations of the breath; the dark veins of her mother; the unmourning water of the riding Thames.*

1. Conclude the lesson with Task 6, which aims to **bring together** what has been examined in this poem. Learners need to look for more examples from the poem to fill the second column and complete the sentences in the final column. This may also be used as a homework task.