



KS4 – I HAVE LONGED TO MOVE AWAY

Suggested learning sequence:

1. Open up a general discussion about **LIES as a theme**.

Invite students to work in small discussion groups.

- What kind of lies do we find ourselves getting embroiled in on a personal level?
- Are there any times when lies are acceptable?
- Are there big lies in the world about which they feel strongly? Politics, world issues, religion, environmental damage, nuclear energy, poverty?
- Is there a difference between a personal lie and a lie within a wider social context?
- What does telling a lie feel like? How do you get out of a lie?

Following this preliminary opening, conduct a class discussion in order to air thoughts on this theme. Gather thoughts on to a display, for possible inspiration later.

2. **Introduce Dylan Thomas** as the author of the poem to be discussed. Invite any contributions from the class based on any previous knowledge about him. It might be that the contributions reveal a one-sided view of him – a drunkard and womaniser. Discuss to what extent that is true – or is that too a lie of sorts. Look at the ppt presentation giving a general overview of Dylan's life.

3. Read the poem to the class

Explain how Dylan Thomas's poetry is particularly well known and loved for the quality of its sound. Sometimes it needs to be heard more than read, in order for the patterning of words and rhythms to create meaning. Read the poem, once to give a general sense of it, and the second time to invite their immediate response. Ask everyone to write a sentence just saying simply what they feel the poem is about. Invite suggestions, making clear that first impressions are just that, and there will be opportunity to refine ideas. Note down some key words from their suggestions.

4. Share the poem

Distribute the poem, and read quietly in pairs, taking a verse each.

- What are the questions you want to ask of the poem?
- What do you think you understand, what is problematic?
- Do you have any ideas about the lie which Dylan Thomas writes about?
- Is it a particular lie or lies in general?
- What kind of feeling do you think the poet was trying to convey? Sadness? Anger? Despair? Fear?



5. Looking closely at the meaning.

Divide the class into 2 halves. One studies the first stanza, the other the second. Ask both groups to work together to present to the other half the meaning of the verse they have been studying. To do this they will have to make sure they understand the meaning of all the words; they will need to consider what kind of images Dylan Thomas presents in the verse, and what those images seem to suggest. This is an initial exploratory session.

The groups present their suggestions to each other, and this should be done in a co-operative way – sharing the work of reading, taking in turns to discuss couplets or sections, for example. The aim is to convey all sorts of ideas which cropped up – not to present a definitive version.

6. Listen to the contributions and ask questions to probe further thought.

Questions can be raised from the class and from the teacher.

7. Considering interpretations.

It might be that there are quite definite personal interpretations that the poem is about any kind of lie which has festered in one's life, some lack of honesty which is eroding a person's integrity. Summarize on the board what the broad interpretations of the lie might be.

8. Introduce the idea of Dylan Thomas's relationship with religion in his work.

Provide the class with a resource sheet of material about his background and the role of religion in it. Explain how it is generally accepted that his work demonstrates the influence of religion, but that he is ambivalent or contradictory. Invite them to consider the poem in the light of that knowledge. Is the lie the lie of religion, arising from what he felt about the strict, narrow non-Conformist religion of his upbringing?

9. Summarize the possible readings of the meaning of the poem, in the light of this knowledge.



10. HAVE A PAUSE.

Take a few minutes and create a visual representation of the poem, in any way which helps you remember what it is conveying. It could be a line by line drawing, or a total diagram; it could be a way of conveying the feeling of the words and the emotive punch. It's not a work of art, just a memory aid or a way of seeing the poem in a different way.

11. Listening to the poem – sound and structure.

Working on annotating the poem. Conduct a reminder session about stylistic techniques – alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, syllables, run-on lines, assonance, onomatopoeia, inverted word order, for example.

Working in pairs, students work on annotating their poem.

- **Consider punctuation** – how many sentences? How are they divided? How do they build up and contribute to the sound?
- **Consider the sound** – what kind of letter sounds can you hear? How are those sound patterns made up? What do they suggest?
- **Look at word patterns** – Is there repetition? Why?
- **Listen to the rhythm** How does the punctuation affect it? Are there lines which have a strong rhythm? How do the syllabic counts of words affect the rhythm?

12. Pairs share ideas with other pairs.

A brief session to exchange ideas, support each other with any difficult areas.

13. Class annotation of the poem.

On the whiteboard, invite annotation from pupils, colour coding different aspects of technique.

14. Concluding session.

What, finally, do people believe the poem to be about? Can it be read in more than one way? What are the lines which they find memorable? What images work for them? What lines have created a powerful sound effect? How has the poem made them feel?