

SAGE Test Sample Response
"Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" and *The Pigman* Chapter 7

Prompt: Write a short essay in which you identify the claim made by the Dylan Thomas poem and then show how some part of Chapter 7 in *The Pigman* supports that claim. Use TEXTUAL EVIDENCE (QUOTES FROM BOTH SOURCES) to support your argument.

Are you afraid to die? Does it bother you to think of *not being* anymore?

If so, you aren't the only one. In Dylan Thomas's poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," the speaker addresses the natural desire to cling to life even when we know the end is near, and he urges his elderly father to "rage against the dying of the light." This attitude toward death also appears in three parts of Chapter 7 of *The Pigman*: when John visits the cemetery, when he mentions his own father is getting old and may die soon, and when he discovers that Mr. Pignati's wife is dead. In all three passages, someone is "raging against" death just as the speaker in the poem does.

Background Info

- attention getter

Even a reader who had not read these texts would be able to understand the argument.

Primary Claim/ Thesis

The claim of the Dylan Thomas poem is that while death is something we all must face, we should fight it to the very end. He says different kinds of people - "wise men," "good men," "wild men," and "grave men" - all "rage against the dying of the light" in their own ways. The dying of the light is a metaphor for death. Just like the sun goes down at the end of a day, our "light" goes out at the end of our lives. If we rage against this as the men in the poem do, it means we fight it angrily, getting the most from every living moment and being dragged into darkness against our will.

Claim #1:
Answers the first part of the question

- Textual evidence

Reasoning (WARRANT) EXPLAINS HOW TEXTUAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTS CLAIM

Chapter 7 in *The Pigman* supports the claim made in the poem. Early in the chapter, John visits a cemetery and says, "I think cemeteries are one of the loveliest places to be - if you're not dead, of course." This shows the common aversion to death that most humans share. Later, while lying on a grave, he imagines all sorts of creepy things about "a finger sticking out of the dirt," and he says, "I'm not afraid of seeing ghosts. I think I'm really looking for ghosts. I want to see them. I'm looking for anything to prove that when I drop dead there's a chance I'll be doing something more interesting than decaying." In his own sarcastic way, John is expressing something we all understand: the terror of not existing anymore and the hope that there is something beyond this life. This is John's way of "raging against the dying of the light," just like Dylan Thomas urges in the poem.

Claim #2:
Answers the second part of the question

- TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

WARRANT

MORE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE REASONING (WARRANT)

reference to primary claim/ thesis

Another such example occurs later in the same chapter, as John's father is trying to convince him to come and work at the Stock Exchange. He says,

TRANSITION TO NEW EVIDENCE

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE (FROM BOOK) - QUOTATION

"The business can be half yours.... I can't take the strain much longer." John comments, "Every time he says that I get a little sick to my stomach because I know it's true. He's almost sixty years old, and I know he's not going to be around much longer. All the guys at the Exchange drop dead of heart attacks."

The fact that it makes him sick to his stomach indicates that John, even though he doesn't have the most loving relationship with his father, he is greatly bothered by the thought of losing him, which most people would see as understandable. We don't want to see our parents die.

REASONING (WARRANT) What does the textual evidence mean?

This is identical to the way Dylan Thomas feels at the end of his poem: "And you, my father, there on the sad height.... Do not go gentle into that good night." Both John and the speaker in the poem fear the loss of their fathers.

TOPIC SENTENCE: THE POINT OF THIS PARAGRAPH (develops claim #2)

MORE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE (FROM POEM) - QUOTATION

At the end of the chapter, John and Lorraine discover the truth about Mr. Pignati's wife, whom he said was visiting her sister in California. When Lorraine finds her picture and asks about it, Mr. Pignati gets choked up and changes the subject. Later, John discovers her funeral bill and knows the truth.

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE - SUMMARY

It is clear at this point that Mr. Pignati is so distraught over the loss of his wife that he is "raging against the dying of the light" in his own way: He is not admitting, even to himself, that she is gone.

reference to primary claim/thesis

He fights death by denying it, like the "good men" in Thomas's poem: "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright/Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,/Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Mr. Pignati's "frail deeds" might be seen as the good times he had with his wife while she was alive, and now that she is gone, he denies her death.

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE - QUOTATION

- EXPLAINS HOW THE CHAPTER & THE POEM ARE SIMILAR

Dylan Thomas urges us to rage against death, and the characters in *The Pigman* are doing this in their own ways. John looks for hope after his own death and gets sick over the realization that one day he will lose his father, while Mr. Pignati denies the death of his beloved wife. Obviously, they understand the sentiment that Dylan Thomas expresses in "Do Not Go Gentle into This Good Night."

Restates primary claim/thesis

summary of main points

Conclusion sentence

Reasoning (WARRANT)

Conclusion paragraph