

Every Morning I Wake

by Dylan Thomas

Notes, Summary, Questions and Answers

(Exam focused Questions)

Class 12 English

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About the Author

Dylan Thomas (1914 to 1953) was one of the greatest Welsh poets of the twentieth century. Born in Swansea, Wales, he became famous for his deeply emotional, highly lyrical, and imaginative poetry. His writing reflects many qualities of Romanticism, including its emphasis on imagination, emotion, intuition, spontaneity, and the beauty of natural language.

*Thomas joined the BBC in 1945, where he gained recognition for his powerful voice and radio performances. His most celebrated work, *Under Milk Wood* (1953), is a radio play set in the imaginary Welsh town of Llareggub. The play portrays one ordinary day in the lives of its unique provincial characters. The poem *Every Morning I Wake* is an extract from this radio play, spoken by the character Reverend Eli Jenkins, whose morning and evening prayers form the foundation of the poem's message about faith, mortality, and God's mercy.*

Summary

Every Morning I Wake is a beautiful prayer poem by Dylan Thomas,

taken from his famous radio play *Under Milk Wood*. Through the voice of Reverend Eli Jenkins, the poem presents a heartfelt prayer offered every morning and every evening for the ordinary people living in the small imaginary Welsh town of Milk Wood. Although the language appears simple, the poem explores profound ideas about human mortality, faith, God's greatness, and the uncertainty of life.

The poem begins with the speaker waking each morning and immediately turning to God in prayer. Rather than asking for personal success or wealth, he requests that God keep His loving eye upon all the poor creatures born to die. These poor creatures are the ordinary people of Milk Wood and, more broadly, all human beings whose lives are temporary and uncertain. The speaker recognizes that every person is born with the certainty of death, making divine mercy more valuable than worldly power.

As evening arrives, the speaker again offers a prayer before sunset. He asks God to bless the entire town because no one knows whether they will survive the coming night. Life is described as *touch and go*, meaning that human existence is fragile and unpredictable. The prayer becomes an expression of gratitude for the present day as well as hope for another sunrise.

In the third stanza, the speaker acknowledges an important truth about human nature. He admits that the people living under Milk Wood are neither completely good nor completely bad. Human beings naturally possess both strengths and weaknesses. While society often judges people based on their mistakes, the speaker believes that God sees their best qualities before their faults. This reflects his deep faith in God's compassion and fairness.

The final stanza becomes a hopeful conclusion to the prayer. The speaker asks God to allow everyone to see another day and bless them throughout the night. The inhabitants bow respectfully to the setting sun, saying goodbye only for now, because they hope to witness the sunrise again. Their farewell is temporary rather than permanent, reflecting their trust that God's grace will carry them safely into another morning.

Throughout the poem, Dylan Thomas presents God as the immortal creator and protector of all life. Unlike kings, billionaires, or scientists, who are themselves mortal, God alone holds every life in His hands. The poem therefore celebrates humility, gratitude, hope, and complete faith in the Creator while reminding readers that human life becomes meaningful through God's blessings.

Important Themes

Faith in God

The poem expresses complete trust in God's mercy, protection, and guidance throughout life.

Human Mortality

Human beings are born to die, making life precious and uncertain.

Prayer

Morning and evening prayers become symbols of gratitude, hope, and dependence on God.

Divine Mercy

The speaker believes that God sees people's best qualities and forgives their weaknesses.

Hope

Despite life's uncertainty, the poem ends with hope for another sunrise.

Human Imperfection

People are neither entirely good nor entirely bad, but God understands them fully.

Character Information

Unlike a narrative story, the poem has only a few symbolic figures whose roles help express its message.

The Speaker: Reverend Eli Jenkins

The speaker is a humble and devoted believer who begins and ends each day with prayer. Instead of praying only for himself, he asks God to bless the entire community of Milk Wood, showing kindness, compassion, and selflessness.

God

God is presented as the supreme creator, protector, and judge of humanity. Unlike mortal human beings, He is eternal, all powerful, and

capable of seeing the best qualities in every person.

The Inhabitants of Milk Wood

The people living under Milk Wood represent ordinary human beings. They are neither completely good nor completely bad, and they depend upon God's mercy because life remains uncertain.

Important Events

Morning Prayer

The speaker begins the day by asking God to protect all living beings.

Prayer for the Poor Creatures

He remembers that every human being is mortal and needs God's care.

Evening Blessing

Before sunset, he asks God to bless the whole town through the uncertain night.

Reflection on Human Nature

The speaker admits that people possess both good and bad qualities.

Hope for Another Sunrise

The prayer ends with faith that God's grace will allow everyone to see

another day.

Difficult Vocabulary

Magnificence: Great beauty, power, or importance.

Benevolence: Kindness and goodwill.

Mercy: Compassion shown toward someone.

Mortality: The condition of eventually dying.

Devotee: A faithful follower.

Inhabitants: People living in a particular place.

Touch and Go: Uncertain or risky.

Dominion: Power or authority.

Grace: God's kindness and blessing.

Immortal: Living forever.

Compassion: Sympathy and concern for others.

Lyrical: Expressing emotions in a musical style.

Key Message and Main Idea

The poem teaches that human life is temporary and uncertain, but faith in God provides hope, comfort, and meaning. While worldly power belongs to mortal people, only the eternal Creator has the power to protect, forgive, and guide humanity through life's uncertain journey.

Literary Devices

Symbolism

The poem's central symbols strengthen its spiritual message.

Morning: Hope and new beginnings.

Evening: Reflection and human uncertainty.

Sunrise: God's blessing and another chance to live.

Sunset: The temporary ending of a day and the uncertainty of life.

Milk Wood: Humanity's ordinary community under God's care.

Imagery

Thomas creates peaceful images of sunrise, sunset, prayer, and ordinary village life that make the spiritual message feel personal and comforting.

Repetition

The repeated references to morning and evening emphasize daily devotion and continuous faith.

Rhyme Scheme

The poem follows an AABB rhyme pattern, giving it the musical quality of a hymn or prayer.

Tone

The tone remains humble, hopeful, sincere, and devotional throughout the poem.

Textbook Exercise and Answers

Understanding the Text

a. When does the speaker pray to the Lord?

The speaker prays to the Lord every morning when he wakes up and every evening at sundown. His prayers begin with gratitude for a new day and end with hope for another sunrise. This daily routine shows that prayer is not an occasional act but a constant expression of faith.

By praying at both the beginning and the end of the day, the speaker acknowledges that every moment of life depends on God's protection. His habit also reflects the traditional practice of thanking God for life's blessings while seeking His care during the uncertain hours of the night.

b. What does the speaker pray for?

The speaker prays for God's mercy, protection, and loving care for all the people living under Milk Wood. Instead of asking for wealth or personal

success, he requests that God keep His loving eye on all the poor creatures born to die.

His prayer is selfless because it includes the entire community rather than focusing only on himself. He also asks God to bless the town every evening so that everyone may safely live to see another morning.

c. Who are the poor creatures? Why does the speaker call them poor creatures?

The poor creatures are primarily the ordinary inhabitants of Milk Wood, but they also represent all human beings living on earth. The speaker calls them poor creatures because they are mortal, fragile, and unable to control their own future.

Human beings are born knowing that one day they must die, and no one can be certain of living until the next morning. Their weakness does not refer only to poverty but to the universal condition of mortality. By using this phrase, the speaker emphasizes humanity's need for God's compassion and protection.

d. Does Milk Wood sound like a type of wood or a place? Why?

Milk Wood sounds like a place rather than a type of wood.

Grammatically, the name appears without an article such as a, an, or the, which is common with proper nouns referring to specific places.

The poem also describes people living under Milk Wood, suggesting that it functions as the name of a community rather than a material or a kind of tree. Since the poem is taken from *Under Milk Wood*, a radio

play set in an imaginary Welsh town, Milk Wood clearly represents a fictional place where ordinary people live their daily lives.

e. Why do the inhabitants of Milk Wood bow to the setting sun but just for now?

The inhabitants bow to the setting sun but just for now because they believe their farewell is only temporary. They end the day's prayer with humility while hoping that God's grace will allow them to witness another sunrise.

Their gesture reflects both gratitude and faith. They recognize that life is uncertain and that no one can guarantee tomorrow, yet they remain optimistic that God's blessings will carry them safely through the night. The phrase just for now therefore expresses hope rather than despair, reminding readers that every sunset carries the possibility of another dawn.

Reference to the Context

a. Discuss Every Morning I Wake as a prayer to God.

Every Morning I Wake is a beautiful prayer poem by Dylan Thomas that expresses complete faith in God's mercy and protection. Spoken through the voice of Reverend Eli Jenkins from Under Milk Wood, the poem presents a sincere prayer offered every morning and every evening for the ordinary people living in Milk Wood. Unlike many prayers that ask for personal success or wealth, this prayer is selfless because it seeks blessings for the entire community.

Every morning, the speaker wakes with gratitude and asks God to keep His loving eye on all the poor creatures born to die. These poor creatures are ordinary human beings whose lives are temporary and uncertain. The speaker recognizes that every person is mortal and cannot control the future, so only God's mercy can give meaning and protection to human life.

In the evening, the speaker again turns to God before sunset. He asks for blessings upon the whole town because no one knows whether they will survive the coming night. The phrase touch and go emphasizes that life is fragile, making prayer an act of both gratitude and hope.

The poem also expresses deep trust in God's fairness. The speaker admits that people are neither completely good nor completely bad, yet he believes God sees their best qualities rather than judging them only by their weaknesses. This reflects the Christian belief in divine compassion and forgiveness.

The final stanza ends with hope instead of fear. The people bow to the setting sun only for now, believing that God's grace will allow them to witness another sunrise. Through its simple language, musical rhyme, and heartfelt devotion, the poem functions as a genuine prayer celebrating God's greatness, mercy, and eternal care for humanity.

b. Why does the speaker make a prayer to God, but not to a king, a billionaire, or a scientist?

The speaker prays to God instead of a king, billionaire, or scientist because he believes that only God possesses unlimited power over human life. Kings may have political authority, billionaires may possess great

wealth, and scientists may have knowledge, but all of them remain ordinary human beings who are themselves born, grow old, and eventually die.

In contrast, God is presented as the immortal creator of the universe. He creates life, protects it, judges it fairly, and ultimately controls its destiny. The speaker believes that every person's life is in God's hands, making Him the only being worthy of complete trust and devotion.

The poem also emphasizes human limitations. No matter how powerful or intelligent people become, they cannot guarantee another sunrise or prevent death forever. Human achievements remain temporary, while God's existence is eternal.

By choosing prayer instead of worldly power, the speaker expresses humility. He understands that material success, political influence, and scientific progress cannot replace divine mercy when facing life's uncertainty. His faith teaches that God's blessings alone can make human life meaningful and provide hope during both joyful and difficult moments.

c. How does the poet highlight the magnificence of God?

Dylan Thomas highlights God's magnificence by presenting Him as the supreme creator, protector, and judge of all living beings. Throughout the poem, God appears as an eternal and compassionate presence whose power extends over every stage of human life.

The speaker begins each morning by asking God to watch over all the poor creatures born to die, showing that every human being depends

upon divine care. This establishes God's greatness because only an all powerful being could protect every life at once.

The poet also emphasizes God's mercy. Human beings are imperfect, possessing both good and bad qualities, but God sees their best side instead of focusing only on their faults. This ability to judge with complete fairness demonstrates His wisdom and compassion.

Another important aspect of God's magnificence is His control over life and death. The speaker admits that no one knows whether they will survive the coming night, making every new morning appear as a gift from God rather than something humans can guarantee for themselves.

Finally, the poem portrays God as greater than every earthly authority. Kings, billionaires, and scientists remain mortal, but God alone is eternal. Through these ideas, Thomas presents God as the ultimate source of protection, forgiveness, hope, and meaning in human life.

d. How does the rhyme scheme of the poem reinforce its message?

The poem follows a regular AABB rhyme scheme, and this musical structure plays an important role in reinforcing its message. The smooth and predictable pattern makes the poem sound like a hymn or a traditional prayer, creating a peaceful atmosphere that matches its devotional purpose.

Each pair of rhyming lines flows naturally into the next, allowing the prayer to feel gentle and sincere rather than dramatic. The regular rhythm also reflects the speaker's daily routine of praying every morning and every evening, suggesting consistency, discipline, and faith.

The musical quality created by the rhyme makes the poem easier to remember and pleasant to read aloud. This is especially appropriate because the poem comes from a radio play, where spoken rhythm becomes particularly important.

Beyond its sound, the rhyme scheme also symbolizes balance and harmony. Just as morning is followed by evening and hope follows uncertainty, the poem's orderly pattern reflects the speaker's trust that God's care continues throughout every stage of life. The rhyme therefore strengthens both the emotional beauty and the spiritual message of the poem.

Reference Beyond the Text

a. Does God exist? Give your opinion.

The question of whether God exists has been discussed throughout human history, and people hold different beliefs depending on their religion, philosophy, and personal experiences. Some people believe firmly in God's existence, while others rely mainly on scientific explanations. In my opinion, God exists as a powerful spiritual reality that gives meaning, hope, and moral direction to human life.

Although God cannot be seen with our physical eyes, many people believe His presence can be felt through kindness, love, forgiveness, compassion, and unexpected moments of hope. Just as we cannot directly see forces such as gravity or wind but recognize their effects, believers often recognize God's presence through the positive influence He has on their lives.

Faith in God also encourages many people to become more honest, caring, patient, and responsible. During difficult times, belief in God often provides emotional strength and comfort that helps people face uncertainty with courage.

At the same time, I respect those who hold different opinions because belief is a personal matter. Whether one approaches God through religion, meditation, or personal reflection, the search for meaning remains an important part of human life.

Ultimately, I believe that God exists not only as a creator but also as a source of hope, guidance, and compassion that inspires people to live better lives.

b. The Importance of God in Society

The French philosopher Voltaire once wrote that even if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him. This thought provoking statement suggests that belief in God plays an important role in maintaining moral values, hope, and social harmony. Whether viewed from a religious or philosophical perspective, the idea of God has influenced human civilization for thousands of years.

One of God's greatest contributions to society is providing a moral foundation. Most religions teach values such as honesty, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, and respect for others. These principles encourage people to avoid harmful actions and become responsible members of society. When individuals believe that their actions have moral consequences, they often become more careful about how they treat others.

Faith in God also offers emotional support during difficult times. People facing illness, loss, failure, or uncertainty often find comfort through prayer and spiritual belief. This inner strength helps them continue living with hope even when life becomes challenging.

God also helps strengthen communities. Religious festivals, places of worship, charitable activities, and community service bring people together, encouraging cooperation and mutual support. Such activities help create stronger social relationships and a greater sense of belonging.

The poem *Every Morning I Wake* reflects this importance beautifully. The speaker does not pray only for himself but for the entire community of Milk Wood. His prayer teaches that faith can encourage compassion, gratitude, and concern for the well being of others.

Of course, people have different beliefs about God's existence, and these differences should be respected. However, the values often associated with faith such as love, mercy, humility, and hope continue benefiting society regardless of individual beliefs.

In conclusion, God remains important because the idea of a higher power encourages moral behavior, emotional resilience, social unity, and hope for a better future. Whether understood through religion or philosophy, faith continues helping many people live meaningful and compassionate lives.

Simple Question Explanations

Why does the speaker pray both in the morning and in the evening?

The speaker prays both in the morning and in the evening because he believes that every moment of life depends on God's mercy. His morning prayer expresses gratitude for a new day and asks God to protect all living beings. His evening prayer, however, carries a different emotion because it recognizes that no one knows whether they will survive the coming night.

By praying at both times, the speaker shows that faith is not limited to moments of difficulty. Instead, prayer becomes a daily habit of thanking God for His blessings and trusting Him during life's uncertainty. This routine also reflects the poem's message that human beings should remain connected with God throughout their lives.

Why are the people called poor creatures?

The people are called poor creatures not because they lack money but because they are mortal and powerless before death. Every human being is born knowing that life will eventually end, and no one can guarantee another sunrise.

The speaker uses this expression to remind readers that all people share the same fragile condition regardless of wealth, status, or intelligence. Their greatest need is God's compassion, protection, and forgiveness rather than worldly power.

Why does the speaker believe God sees people's best side?

The speaker believes God sees people's best side because human beings are naturally imperfect. People often judge others based only on mistakes and weaknesses, but God understands every person's

intentions, struggles, and goodness.

This belief gives the speaker hope that divine judgment is fair, compassionate, and forgiving. It also encourages people to trust God's mercy rather than fear constant punishment.

Why is the ending hopeful?

The ending is hopeful because the inhabitants say goodbye to the setting sun only for now. Their farewell is temporary rather than permanent, showing that they believe another sunrise will come through God's grace.

Although life remains uncertain, the speaker chooses hope instead of fear. This optimistic ending reinforces the poem's central message that faith can provide comfort even when the future cannot be predicted.

Important Lines and Passages

Every morning when I wake, Dear Lord, a little prayer I make.

These opening lines establish the poem's devotional tone. They immediately show that prayer is an essential part of the speaker's daily life and introduce the poem's central relationship between humanity and God.

On all poor creatures born to die.

This line summarizes one of the poem's most important ideas. It reminds readers that every human being is mortal and equally dependent

on God's mercy, regardless of social position or wealth.

For whether we last the night or no I'm sure is always touch and go.

This passage expresses life's uncertainty. The phrase touch and go suggests that survival is never guaranteed, making gratitude and faith especially meaningful.

We are not wholly bad or good.

This line reflects the poem's balanced understanding of human nature. Instead of dividing people into perfect saints or complete sinners, the speaker recognizes that everyone possesses both strengths and weaknesses.

To the sun we all will bow and say, good bye but just for now.

These closing lines create one of the poem's most memorable images. The temporary farewell symbolizes hope, trust in God's protection, and confidence that another day may come.

Exam Focused Questions

1. How does Dylan Thomas present faith in *Every Morning I Wake*?

Dylan Thomas presents faith as a constant part of everyday life rather than something practiced only during difficult times. The speaker begins each morning with gratitude and ends each evening with hope, believing that God's mercy protects all living beings. Faith becomes a source of comfort, humility, and trust despite life's uncertainty.

2. How does the poem present human mortality?

The poem presents mortality by describing human beings as poor creatures born to die. The speaker recognizes that no one can guarantee another sunrise, making every day a precious gift. This awareness encourages gratitude and dependence on God's blessings.

3. Why is *Every Morning I Wake* called a prayer poem?

The poem is called a prayer poem because it directly addresses God, asks for blessings upon the community, expresses gratitude for life, and seeks protection for all people. Its simple language, musical rhythm, and devotional tone resemble a traditional hymn.

4. How does the speaker describe God?

The speaker describes God as the eternal creator, protector, and judge of humanity. Unlike mortal people such as kings or scientists, God is immortal, compassionate, and able to see the best qualities in every person.

5. How does the poem portray human nature?

The poem portrays human nature realistically by admitting that people are neither completely good nor completely bad. Everyone possesses strengths and weaknesses, but God's mercy allows people to hope for forgiveness and understanding.

6. What is the significance of Milk Wood in the poem?

Milk Wood is more than the name of an imaginary Welsh town. It symbolizes an ordinary human community where everyday people live, work, pray, and face the same uncertainty of life as everyone else.

7. What is the central message of *Every Morning I Wake*?

The central message is that human life is temporary and uncertain, but faith in God gives people hope, comfort, forgiveness, and the courage to face each new day with gratitude.

Commonly Confusing Points

Is Milk Wood a real place?

No. Milk Wood is an imaginary Welsh town created by Dylan Thomas in his radio play *Under Milk Wood*.

Who speaks the poem?

The speaker is Reverend Eli Jenkins, a character from *Under Milk Wood*, who offers prayers for his community.

Why is the poem called a prayer poem?

Because the speaker directly addresses God and asks for blessings, protection, mercy, and guidance throughout the day.

What does *touch and go* mean?

It means uncertain or risky. In the poem, it refers to the uncertainty of

whether people will live to see another morning.

Why are kings, billionaires, and scientists mentioned?

They represent worldly power, wealth, and knowledge. The speaker contrasts them with God's eternal power to show that only God has ultimate control over human life.

What does good bye but just for now mean?

It means the farewell is temporary because the speaker hopes to witness another sunrise through God's grace.

Quick Revision

Poet

Dylan Thomas

Source

Extract from Under Milk Wood

Genre

Prayer Poem

Speaker

Reverend Eli Jenkins

Setting

The imaginary Welsh town of Milk Wood

Beginning

The speaker wakes and offers a morning prayer asking God to protect all living beings.

Development

He prays for the whole community, reflects on human mortality, and trusts God's mercy.

Turning Point

The speaker admits that no one knows whether they will survive the coming night.

Ending

The people bid farewell to the setting sun with hope of seeing another sunrise.

Major Themes

Faith in God, human mortality, prayer, divine mercy, hope, gratitude, and human imperfection.

Important Symbols

Morning: New beginnings and God's blessings.

Evening: Life's uncertainty and reflection.

Sunrise: Hope and another chance to live.

Sunset: Temporary farewell and mortality.

Milk Wood: Ordinary human society under God's care.

Rhyme Scheme

AABB

Tone

Humble, hopeful, devotional, and sincere.

Key Lesson

The poem teaches that although human life is uncertain and temporary, faith in God's mercy allows people to face each day with gratitude, compassion, and hope.

One Minute Revision

Every Morning I Wake is a prayer poem by Dylan Thomas taken from Under Milk Wood. Through the voice of Reverend Eli Jenkins, the speaker prays every morning and every evening for the ordinary people of Milk Wood. He asks God to protect the poor creatures born to die,

acknowledging that human life is uncertain and temporary. The speaker believes that people are neither completely good nor completely bad, but God's mercy allows Him to see their best qualities. The poem ends with the inhabitants saying goodbye to the setting sun but just for now, expressing hope that God's blessings will bring another sunrise.

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