

**Think.Discuss.Act**

**Podcast Paideia Seminar Plan**

**Big Idea:** Happiness

**Text:** “Fern Hill,” by Dylan Thomas

**Ideas, Values:** Beauty, Childhood, Happiness, Nature, Time

**Think**

**Big Ideas Chat:**

Discuss with friends and family the nature of happiness. Is it possible to know if you are happy in the moment or is it something that you can only realize in retrospect?

**Read Aloud**:

Read aloud the text while family and/or friends listen.

**Vocabulary:**

Check to see if there are any words that need to be talked about before the discussion begins. Listeners or readers can use context clues to help figure out possible definitions or use a dictionary or device to get a formal definition.

**Discuss**

**Pre-Process:**

**Share why you are having the discussion.**

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars; modify to fit your household.)

*“Our discussion is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open-ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of the discussion is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

**Describe what you want to accomplish.**

**Set a Goal:**

* + To balance the talk time
  + To refer to the text
  + To ask a question
  + To speak out of uncertainty
  + To build on others’ comments

**Discussion Questions:**

**Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):**

* What phrase from the first four stanzas best captures the mood of the speaker’s childhood at Fern Hill? (round-robin response)

**Core (Analyze textual details):**

* How would you describe the tone of the first four stanzas of this poem? What specific words best capture that tone?
* What do you think the speaker of the poem means when he writes (in D-6) “So it must have been after the birth of the simple light / In the first, spinning place”?
* Is there a spiritual element to this poem? What in the text makes you think so (or not)?
* At what point in this poem does the tone shift? How would you describe the tone of the last stanza? Refer to the text.
* Based on the poem, do you think that the loss of childhood’s happiness is inevitable? Why or why not?

**Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):**

* Is it possible to recreate the happiness of childhood as an adult? If so, how?

**Post-Discussion Process:**

Take time to assess the conversation you’ve just had. Did it meet your needs as a participant? In what ways did you contribute to the increased understanding of the others involved?

**Act**

**Post-Discussion Action**

**Transition to Action:**

* Review and discuss key ideas that you heard, said, and thought during the discussion.

**Brainstorm:**

* If you were to write a recipe for happiness, what ingredients would you include? How would you prepare the dish? Consider what you might add to your own life at the present moment that would create or sustain happiness?

**Action:**

* Using the recipe you prepared above, consciously set about creating a capacity for happiness—in your own life and perhaps in the lives of others.

**This Podcast Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:**

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**Organization:** National Paideia Center

**\*Text is attached if open-sourced.**

**\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.**

*Fern Hill*

[Dylan Thomas](https://poets.org/poet/dylan-thomas)  (1914–1953)

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs  
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,  
     The night above the dingle starry,  
          Time let me hail and climb  
     Golden in the heydays of his eyes,  
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns  
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves  
          Trail with daisies and barley  
     Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns  
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,  
     In the sun that is young once only,  
          Time let me play and be  
     Golden in the mercy of his means,  
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves  
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,  
          And the sabbath rang slowly  
     In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay  
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air  
     And playing, lovely and watery  
          And fire green as grass.  
     And nightly under the simple stars  
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,  
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars  
     Flying with the ricks, and the horses  
          Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white  
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all  
     Shining, it was Adam and maiden,  
          The sky gathered again  
     And the sun grew round that very day.  
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light  
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm  
     Out of the whinnying green stable  
          On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house  
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,  
     In the sun born over and over,  
          I ran my heedless ways,  
     My wishes raced through the house high hay  
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows  
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs  
     Before the children green and golden  
          Follow him out of grace,

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me  
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,  
     In the moon that is always rising,  
          Nor that riding to sleep  
     I should hear him fly with the high fields  
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.  
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
          Time held me green and dying  
     Though I sang in my chains like the sea.