Education Resources
Pre-Production
Sydney Theatre Company presents
UNDER MILK WOOD
By Dylan Thomas

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Education Resource written by Kerreen Ely-Harper and compiled by Education Coordinator Toni Murphy

KEY
AIM of exercise or section + Extension Exercises
Drama Exercises + English Exercises
Download and watch
Play online

UNDER MILK WOOD
Sydney Theatre Company Education Resources 2012
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www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STCED
www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about/us

CREATIVE TEAM
Director – Andrew Upton
Set Designer – Robert Cousins
Costume Designer – Tbc
Composer – Alan John
Sound Designer – Steve Francis
Associate Director – Kip Williams
Voice and Dialect Director – Charmian Gradwell

CAST
Paula Arundell                  Drew Livingston
Drew Forsythe                   Bruce Spence
Cameron Goodall                 Jack Thompson
Sandy Gore                      Helen Thomson
Alan John

THEMES
Language & Voice                Poetry
Radio Drama

FIRST VOICE
From where you are, you can hear their dreams.

Under Milk Wood

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SYNOPSIS

Night

FIRST VOICE tells us to be quiet and listen to the dreams of the townsfolk of the mythical Welsh village, Llareggub. Taking it in turns FIRST and SECOND VOICE narrate ‘the eyes and secrets’ of the town’s dreamers in ‘streets rocked to sleep by the sea’.

Second Voice introduces FIRST DROWNED and CAPTAIN CAT, a blind sea Captain. The voices of the dead of the sea rise up to ask him ‘how is it above?’ Lovers MYFANWY PRICE and MOG EDWARDS call to each other in longing for their wedding day. EVANS the undertaker laughs in his sleep. MR WALDO’s dream of his mother is interrupted by his screaming wife and the gossip of neighbours. MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD widower of both MR OGMORE and MR PRITCHARD wakes in her dream to give instructions to her dead husbands. GOSSAMER BEYNON, school teacher and the Butcher’s daughter dreams of ‘a small rough ready man’ who gives her a wink. ORGAN MORGAN, the organist, cries in his dream for the music he can hear in Coronation Street. Cocklers, MR and MRS FLOYD, remain quietly asleep ‘like two old kippers in a box’. MR UTAH WATKINS counts sheep, smiling and knitting. OCKY MILKMAN empties his milk churns into the Dewi River. Next door CHERRY OWEN drinks a fish. P.C.ATTILA gets out of bed too early. The postman WILLY NILLY sleep walks up the street and knocks on MRS WILLY NILLY’S door. She pleads him not to spank her. But he does so every night. More dreamers and their dreams come to life - SINBAD SAILOR, LILY SMALLS, MAE ROSE COTTAGE and snoring BESSIE BIGHEAD. The Inspectors of Cruelty fly into MRS BUTCHER BEYNON’S dream to prosecute her husband for selling dubious meat products. REV. ELI JENKINS, poet and preacher dreams of reciting Eisteddfodua verse. School Master, MR PUGH dreams of murdering his wife. MARY ANN SAILORS dreams of the Garden of Eden. Down the garden path ‘past beanrows and onion-bed and tomatoes’ she sits and shells peas on her lap. In Donkey Street DAI BREAD, POLLY GARTER, NOGOOD BOYO, and LORD CUT-GLASS dream of harems, babies, ticking clocks and nothing at all.

Dawn

FIRST VOICE tells us to stand on Llareggub Hill. From here we can see the town below sleeping.
The VOICE OF A GUIDE BOOK leads us around the streets, lanes and nearby farms.

Morning

A cock crows. CAPTAIN CAT pulls the get-out-of-bed bell. REV.ELI JENKINS recites his morning service verse for the new day. LILY SMALLS wakes puts on the kettle and looking at her self in the mirror laments nobody loves her. MRS BEYON becomes impatient and calls for her tea. MR. and MRS PUGH exchange murderous pleasantries. Looking out their window the PUGH’S gossip nastily about their neighbours who have begun their business for the day. P.C. ATILLA stamps out of Handcuff House. MARY ANN SAILORS calls to the heavens her age. ORGAN MORGAN plays his music. DAI BREAD is hurrying to the bakery. MRS DAI BREAD asks neighbour MRS SARAH if she can spare a loaf of bread and asks after her boils. MRS DAI BREAD TWO lights up her pipe. LORD CUT-GLASS runs out of his house to empty his slops bucket. NOGOOD BOYO declares he’s ‘up to no good in the wash-house’. MISS MYFANWY PRICE eats a delicious breakfast of egg, toast, butter and home-made plum jam. POLLY GARTER breastfeeds her baby under the washing line, wondering where her babies’ fathers are.

The dreamers now awake eat breakfast – black brackish tea, cocoa, sea-fry, onions boiled in their overcoats. MRS CHERRY OWENS recounts her husband’s previous night’s drunken revelry of song and dance. BUTCHER BEYNON teases his wife about their fried breakfast being the cat’s liver. LILY SMALL accuses him of being the biggest liar in town. The Sailors arms pub has opened and SINBAD SAILORS draws a pint. The school bell rings and children are wiped, picked, scrubbed and shrilled off to school. People head off to work. MR EDWARDS whispers he loves MYFANWY PRICE. CAPTAIN CAT names the children he can hear but can’t see as they pass by. He listens intently as WILLY NILLY delivers and reads the post to MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD, MRS PUGH, MR EDWARDS and MR WALDO.

People are moving up and down the street. The women gossip about the townspeople as they gather at MRS ORGAN MORGAN’S general store. WILLY NILLY and his wife steam open a love letter from MOG EDWARDS to MYFANWY PRICE. MOG fears if his tailoring business does not improve he’ll end up in the workhouse. FISHERMAN declares it’s too rough for fishing and heads toward the Sailors Arms. The school bell announces the children who scamper into the...
school yard singing their song. CAPTAIN CAT sings along, as do the vegetables and town dogs. MRS DAI BREAD TWO swindles MRS DAI BREAD ONE out of her housekeeping money with an elaborate crystal ball fortune tale that is interrupted by cloud cover. REV. ELI JENKINS on his morning round of calls, stops to listen to POLLY GARTER sing as she scrubs the floors of the Mothers’ Union Dance. SINBAD SAILORS declares his love for GOSSAMER BEYNON. And she for him, even if he ‘drops his aitches’.

Morning school is over and the children play. GWENNIE calls the boys to kiss her ‘where she says or give her a penny.’ THIRD BOY who fails to kiss her because his mother says he mustn’t is chased downhill by a shrill of giggling girls, his pants falling down and burning with bruises.

Mr PUGH now fantasizes about poisoning his wife. MRS ORGAN-MORGAN gossips about Polly Garter with her husband who has not been listening to a word she’s said. She chastises him for only being interested in his organ music. LORD CUT-GLASS listens to his kitchen full of sixty-five clocks ticking. POLLY GARTER bemoans her dead lovers.

Afternoon

CAPTAIN CAT weeps for his lost love, ROSIE PROBERT. They share a duet and she asks him to remember her, because she has forgotten him. A mother and CHILD see him crying. NOGOOD BOYO fishes and dreams of MRS DAI BREAD TWO and a bowing GEISHA girl.

MAE ROSE COTTAGE lazily blows a puff ball reciting ‘he loves me, he loves me not’. REV.ELI JENKINS is writing his life’s work – the White Book of Llareggub – on the history of the town. It is milking time on farmer UTAH WATKINS dairy. He rants and raves about the cows he can’t control. His milkmaid BESSIE BIGHEAD takes a gentler approach. MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD wills herself to sleep. The night approaching the ghosts of her husbands slip through the keyhole and into her house. MAE ROSE COTTAGE waits for love in the clover. As sunset approaches the REV.ELI JENKINS recites a poem saying goodbye to the day and gives his blessing to the night. JACK BLACK prepares to meet with Satan in the Wood. LILY SMALLS and NOGOOD BOYO rendezvous in the washroom. CHERRY OWEN heads to the Sailors Arms for a drink. SINBAD calls for Gossamer Beynon.
Night

The dead rush back to the sea, and the sandman is coming. The young women dance and the young men wolf whistle. A drunk MR WALDO sings. CAPTAIN CAT sees his drowned shipmates. ORGAN-MORGAN mistakes a drunk CHERRY OWEN who is lying on a tombstone for Johann Sebastian Bach. MOG EDWARDS and MYFANWY PRICE write their every night love letters to each other before going to sleep. MR WALDO meets his beloved POLLY GARTER in the dusky wood. The night descends and the good people of Llareggub return to their dreaming.

Consider

Llareggub – spells ‘bugger all’ backwards

Dreams represent your primal instincts

We spend a third of our lives asleep
HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

Dylan Thomas 1914-1953

Dylan Thomas was a slob. He was a dreadful man, absolutely terrible, ... I think what increasingly interests people, and I know what interests students, is this big difference between, if you like, the man and the work. Now, he was a terrible man and he wrote, I think, rather good and occasionally great poetry.

J A Davies

Dylan Maralais Thomas was born in Swansea, a coastal town in Wales, 1914 and died a few days after his thirty-ninth birthday in New York. A poet and an alcoholic, he is believed to have said when dying, “After 39 years, this is all I’ve done”.

The son of an English teacher Thomas began writing poetry as a small child. After leaving school he became a reporter for the South Wales Evening Post. He was twenty years old when his first volume of verse Eighteen Poems was published. Moving to London he worked as a journalist for the BBC. In 1936 he married Caitlin Macnamara and published his next book Twenty Five Poems. He and Caitlin moved to Laugharne in Carmarthenshire, South West Wales. An asthmatic he was deemed unfit to serve in the Second World War. In 1940 Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog, a collection of short stories, received critical acclaim. In 1946 another book of poems, Deaths and Entrances was published. Thomas’s readings and recordings of his own work became very popular. Brandon Kershner commented that Thomas ‘became the wild man from the West, the Celtic bard with the magical rant, a folk figure with racial access to roots of experience which more civilized Londoners lacked.’

Thomas’s writing drew upon the Romantic, Celtic and French Symbolist poetic traditions. He was a great admirer of John Donne, the early nineteenth century poets, William Blake, John Keats, and William Wordsworth, and the Welsh born poet George Herbert. He read the French Symbolists – Rimbaud, Nerval, Verlaine, Baudelaire. And was most certainly influenced by James Joyce. A lover of the cinema from his childhood he would write documentary screen plays as well as a number of unproduced feature fiction films.
Under Milk Wood’s first iteration was as a story Quiet Early One Morning broadcast on BBC radio. Raymond Williams, in Dylan Thomas: A Collection of Critical Essays (1966) said that Under Milk Wood is ‘not a mature work, but the retained extravagance of an adolescent's imaginings. Yet it moves, at its best, into a genuine involvement, an actual sharing of experience, which is not the least of its dramatic virtues.’ Thomas read the play as a solo performance at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 3, 1953. By this stage his health was progressively deteriorating through heavy drinking and morphine use. On 9th November 1953, after an infamous drinking binge in New York’s White Horse Pub he died of pneumonia complications.

Consider
Poetry is finer and more philosophical than history; for poetry expresses the universal, and history only the particular.

Aristotle

I’m a reader, you know. I was corrupted by Faust. And Shakespeare. And Proust. And Hemingway. But mostly I was corrupted by Dylan Thomas.

Richard Burton

A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape of the universe, helps to extend everyone's knowledge of himself and the world around him.

Dylan Thomas

References:
Brandon Kershner, Dylan Thomas: The Poet and his Critics, 1977
Raymond Williams, Dylan Thomas: A Collection of Critical Essays, 1966
Dylans’ Poems

Do not go gentle into that good night

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

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.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Clown In The Moon

My tears are like the quiet drift
Of petals from some magic rose;
And all my grief flows from the rift
Of unremembered skies and snows.

I think, that if I touched the earth,
It would crumble;
It is so sad and beautiful,
So tremulously like a dream.
Additional Resources

Biography
Poetry Foundation for comprehensive listings of critical works about Thomas and artistic works by him
http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/dylan-thomas

*Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work*, John Ackerman, 1996

Dylan Thomas website
http://www.dylanthomas.com/

New Quay, Wales website – images of where Thomas lived and wrote
http://www.newquay-westwales.co.uk/dylan_thomas.htm

BBC Wales
http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/sites/dylan-thomas/pages/writer.shtml

On Film
*Under Milkwood*, 1972

View *New Towns For Old*, 1942. Clip On Yorkshire Film Archive website
Thomas wrote the screen play – see more titles on Dylan Thomas website
http://www.yfaonline.com/node/1023

On Radio
Online Recorded Readings of Poems, Poetry Archive by Dylan Thomas.
http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=7091

How Under Milk Wood was conceived based on the book *The Growth Of Milk Wood*
http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/creativeinstinct/the-trials-of-milkwood/3960964

On Youtube
Listen to Richard Burton as First Voice
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuPO2KvqIms

Richard Burton reads Rev. Eli Jenkins poem
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgMRD84MTQY&feature=related

Anthony Hopkins reads ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1fTlIsUGks&feature=fvwrel

John Cale’s orchestration and Boy Choir rendition of *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maISWZ8Tpsc

Under Milkwood websites
http://undermilkwood.webs.com/

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AIM: To explore and examine Dylan Thomas’s use of word, image and voice in Under Milk Wood.

Words, Images, Voices
The language is muscular and full of imagery; there is warmth and irony in the way Thomas turns the words to give his personal impression of a small Welsh town where even the wind is musical. It needs alertness to the image for almost every word contains a picture.

Cicely Berry
Voice and the Actor

What advice is Cicely Berry giving to the actor in how to approach performing Under Milk Wood?

Read the opening monologue

First Voice

To begin at the beginning:

It is Spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine to-night in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock, the shops in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widows' weeds. And all the people of the lulled and dumbfound town are sleeping now.

Highlight all words beginning with 'b' in the same colour

Highlight (in a different colour) all the words beginning with 's' in a different colour

Read the monologue aloud

Be as precise as you can with the words

Let the humour come over

How do the sounds, repetitions and patterns of sounds create mood and tone?
List all the images that come to mind.

Select a favourite line of text – ‘fishingboat bobbing sea’, ‘houses as blind as moles’

Draw

AND/OR

Collect images to create a storyboard for the sleeping dreamers of Llareggub.

Extension:

Highlight all the words/phrases related to the theme of sound, sight, dreaming, sleeping.

Embodying the Voice

Under Milk Wood tells the story of one day in the lives of its characters. These characters are ‘disembodied voices’ who reveal their night time dreams and go about their daily lives unaware of our presence.

Under Milk Wood was initially conceived as a radio play where sound and voices tell the story and create the pictures for the audience who cannot see the actors, but can image what they hear.

Choose one person to read First Voice

OR

Select a recording of the monologue by a professional actor (Richard Burton, Dylan Thomas)

Lie on the ground

Close your eyes

Listen to the words

What pictures, images come up in your mind’s eye?

Feelings? Thoughts?

Stand up, begin walking

Speak the words quietly to yourself.

Listen to the whispered words of others as they move around you.

Explore individual words and phrases – on a whisper, louder, fast, slow.

Find out what you can do with your voice.

UNDER MILK WOOD

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What can sound do?

**Allow** sound and sense to come together naturally – don’t force anything.

**Allow** the words to effect the voice.

What pictures, images come up in your mind’s eye?

Feelings? Thoughts?

Sit back to back with a partner.

A close eyes and listen

B speaks the monologue

Swap roles

What pictures, images come up in your mind’s eye?

Feelings? Thoughts?

[Image]

Extension:

Only speak the lines when you can see the images first.

The Punctuation Exercise

First Voice’s monologue is difficult as the breathing and the sense are interwoven. The following punctuation exercise is designed to assist you in how to observe the form and structure of Thomas’s text, while retaining sense and the logic of the story being told.

**Read** the monologue without the punctuation

*First Voice*

To begin at the beginning

It is Spring moonless night in the small town starless and bible-black the cobblestreets silent and the hunched courters and rabbits wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack slow black crowblack fishingboat bobbing sea the houses are blind as moles though moles see fine tonight in the snouting velvet dingles or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock the shops in mourning the Welfare Hall in widows weeds and all the people of the lulled and dumbfounded town are sleeping now
Read with the punctuation

First Voice

To begin at the beginning:

It is Spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and- rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine to-night in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock, the shops in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widows' weeds. And all the people of the lulled and dumbfound town are sleeping now.

Re-Read with the punctuation.

Stop at every comma, full stop, colon and semi-colon
Take a breathe in and hold (without straining)
Speak the line or word, releasing your breath.
Continue working through the monologue, punctuation point by punctuation point.

For example:
It is Spring, - STOP, TAKE A BREATHE IN & RELEASE
moonless night in the small town, - STOP, BREATHE IN & RELEASE
starless and bible-black, - STOP, BREATHE IN & RELEASE
Read now with the punctuation, taking a new breath only when you need to.

Reference: Cicely Berry, Voice and the Actor
AIM: To understand and analyse Thomas’s use of poetic devices and techniques in *Under Milk Wood*

I do not mind from where the images of a poem are dragged up; drag them up, if you like, from the nethermost sea of the hidden self; but, before they reach paper, they must go through all the rational processes of the intellect.

Dylan Thomas

The Poet At Work

Research Dylan’s Poetry
Choose a poem to study.

Compare & Contrast the poem with a selected excerpt from *Under Milk Wood*.
What are the differences, similarities?

Thomas's poetry has been described as original but difficult. Like all poets he was obsessed with words, with their sound and rhythm and with the possibilities for multiple meanings. He often used illogical and grammatically incorrect syntax to serve the rhythm and catalogues of imagery and verbal puns he loved to create.

Form small discussion groups

Read following excerpt from opening First Voice monologue:

*First Voice*

Time passes. Listen. Time passes.

Come closer now.

Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. Only you can see in the blinded bedrooms, the combs and petticoats over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing, dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.

From where you are, you can hear their dreams.
Highlight key imagery.
How does Thomas create rhythm and momentum through his use of words and poetic devices?

Find & List examples of his use of:
- Rhyme
- Repetition
- Verbal Puns
- Catalogue Lists
- Assonance – a vowel rhyme, as in ‘seas of their dreams’
- Alliteration - repetition of the beginning sounds of words, as in ‘hear the houses’

Extension:
Choose a short excerpt from the Under Milk Wood text you would describe as ‘difficult’. For example, Rev. Eli Jenkins ‘Dear Gwalia!’ verse.

(Listen to Richard Burton’s rendition, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgMRD84MTQY)

Read & Discuss possible meanings and interpretations of the text.

Complete these lines written by Thomas in the loose verse style of Under Milk Wood.

Years and years ago, when I was a boy
........................................................................................................

There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke
........................................................................................................

Rage, rage against the dying of the light
........................................................................................................

I think, that if I touched the earth
........................................................................................................

Listen. It is night moving in the streets
........................................................................................................

Remember last night?
........................................................................................................

Every Saturday
........................................................................................................

And she burst into tears
........................................................................................................

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Extension:
Write a short story beginning with one of these first lines as a starting point.

The Radio Dramatist At Work
Adapt your selected Thomas poem
OR
short story into a radio drama to be performed by actors.
Consider
Sound Effects – specific, detailed, with a definite role in narration
Music & Song
Absurd & Surreal events – horror and suspense, fantasy
Avoid long speeches & long silences
Rhythmic short speeches
Loose verse with rhyming couplets

Extension:
Perform & Record the scene

Choose a scene from the Under Milk Wood play text.
Add Sound Effects and/or music as appropriate
Rehearse, Perform & Record
Present as a radio play.

Reference: Annis Pratt, Dylan Thomas's early prose

"PREACHER"
To be your awful wedded wife.

Under Milk Wood
AIM: To explore the importance of sound and the relevance of place in *Under Milk Wood*.

**Pot Boiling Stories of Place**

"I've been busy over stories, pot-boiling stories for a book, semi-autobiographical, to be finished by Christmas."

Dylan Thomas

**Discuss** your understanding of Thomas’s term ‘pot boiling’ stories?

His wife Caitlin described the relevance of Wales to Thomas’s writing as the “land of his birth, which he never in thought, and hardly ever in body, moved out of”.

**Research** Dylan’s birthplace of Swansea, Wales.

**See** New Quay, Wales website – for images of where Thomas also lived and wrote

[http://www.newquay-westwales.co.uk/dylan_thomas.htm](http://www.newquay-westwales.co.uk/dylan_thomas.htm)

**How important is place and memory of place in Under Milk Wood?**

**List** 5 key places referred to in the text

**Find** 3 quotes where characters refer to the importance of belonging to Llareggbub.

**Sound & Place**

Sound is as important as sense in Dylan Thomas’s work — possibly even more important.

Dylan Thomas: The Poetic Foundation

**Describe** your street, suburb or another personally significant place in 5 words

**Add** 5 Adjectives

5 Verbs

5 Nouns

---

**MRS ORMORE-PRITCHARD**

Dust the china, feed the canary, sweep the drawing room floor

*Under Milk Wood*
Re-arrange the words to create a word picture that captures how you think and feel about your street/suburb.

Add 5 Sounds

Add 5 Colours

Add 5 Characters – give them names, physical characteristics, relationships, behaviours

Develop into a short scene, poem, radio play, film script.

Imagine the dreams of your neighbours as they lie asleep.

Write a short piece in the style of Under Milk Wood based on your own street, suburb, community or a place of significance you have visited or lived in.

Begin your piece with:

To begin at the beginning:

It is ...........................................

OR

From where you are, you can hear their dreams.

........................................................................................................................................

Performance Reflection:

How important is sound in the production?

How does the production create a sense of place?
AIM: To understand and critique *Under Milk Wood*’s production elements and directorial approach.

The Director’s Voice

**Read** Kip Williams’s interview on the STC blog ‘On Dylan Thomas, childhood plays and Hamlet’

**Describe** Kip William’s approach to directing. What were his early influences?
**Support** your response with specific quotes from the Q&A interview.

Williams describes the experience of reading *Under Milk Wood* as ‘like embarking on a wild treasure hunt through the complicated minds of the fictional town of Llareggub’.

**Discuss** this comment with reference to your own experience of reading *Under Milk Wood*.
**Discuss** the differences between a radio play and a stage play.

**Extension:**

**Read** Andrew Uptons’ statement on the appeal of *Under Milk Wood* for a contemporary audience.

Post-Performance Reflection:

**List** three exciting moments for you in the production.

What would you rate the production out of ten? Why?

Are there new things you have learned about Dylan Thomas’s text from seeing this production?

**Images of Place & Time**

**Describe** the set design.

**Consider:**

Lighting   Colour Palette   Use of Technology   Image & Symbol
Look at the ‘Visual portal: Photographer Derek Henderson on weather, inspiration & Under Milk Wood’ on STC blog

Discuss the utilisation of Derek Henderson’s images in the production.
Imagine the production without them. How would it be different?

The play occurs across a single day.
How is the passing of time conveyed through the use of lighting, image, design and staging?
Support your response with specific examples from the production.

Sound & Music
How did sound and music contribute to the performance?

Give three examples of when sound design and music were effective in enhancing the on-stage action, mood and drama.

Consider how the use of sound and music contributed to highlighting and contrasting the humorous and tragic elements within the play.

Describe a funny moment in the performance.
Describe a tragic or sad moment.

Extension:

Read Alan John’s interview on the STC blog.

Discuss his choice to play live music to accompany the voices of the actors.
How effective a device was this in bringing the world of Llaregg bub to life?
AIM: To explore the characters, use of humour and dream imagery in *Under Milk Wood*.

FIRST VOICE   Now behind the eyes and secrets of the dreamers in the streets rocked to sleep by the sea, see the ...

**Character Journeys**

**List** five or more of your favourite characters.

**Write** three different adjectives to describe each.

**Compare & contrast** the characters. Who do you like the most? Who do you dislike? Who do you feel sorry for?

**Discuss** what makes them funny, sad, grotesque, strange, scary, endearing?

**Divide** into groups of 3-5.

Each group **choose** a different character from the play to work on.

**Re-tell** the story of the individual character’s journey from the beginning of the play to the end.

**Remember** the story is told over one single day.

**Choose** five key moments in the character’s journey.

**Select** five spoken quotes to accompany their five key moments.

**Make** five physical tableau’s to match the five key moments and quotes.

**Present** your character’s journey to an audience.

**Extension:**

**Consider** having one member of the group acting as a narrator.

**Instruct** the audience to close their eyes between the transitions and open them to reveal the next tableau moment to create suspense and surprise.

**Discuss** the range of choices made by the groups to re-tell the character journeys.
Voicing Humour

Post-Performance Reflection:
What made the audience laugh when watching *Under Milk Wood*?
What made you laugh at a particular character or moment in the play?

**Discuss** how Dylan Thomas creates humour through his use of language.
**Find** five examples of humour in the play.
**Read & discuss** this excerpt:

FIRST VOICE
And in the little pink-eyed cottage next to the undertaker's,
lie, alone, the seventeen snoring gentle stone of Mister
Waldo, rabbitcatcher, barber, herbalist, catdoctor, quack,
his fat pink hands, palms up, over the edge of the patchwork
quilt, his black boots neat and tidy in the washing-basin,
his bowler on a nail above the bed, a milk stout and a slice
of cold bread pudding under the pillow; and, dripping in
the dark, he dreams of

MOTHER
This little piggy went to market
This little piggy stayed at home
This little piggy had roast beef
This little piggy had none
And this little piggy went

LITTLE BOY
wee wee wee wee wee

MOTHER
all the way home to

UNDER MILK WOOD
Sydney Theatre Company Post-Production Education Resources 2012
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WIFE (_Screaming_)  
Waldo! Wal-do!

MR WALDO
Yes, Blodwen love?

WIFE
Oh, what'll the neighbours say, what'll the neighbours...

**Identify** what techniques Thomas has used for humourous effect when introducing the character of Mr Waldo.

**Consider:**
- parody
- ridicule
- caricature
- use of taboos – sexual, anti-social behaviours
- peculiar or illogical situations
- word play
- incongruity
- disorder
- syntax & grammar

**Dreams, Dreaming & Dreamers**

MOG EDWARDS  I dreamed last night ...

The characters of *Under Milk Wood* reveal their dreams to us. Within these dreams lie the character’s deepest thoughts and desires.
Read this excerpt

Discuss what the character’s dreams reveal about their personalities, wants and hopes?

FIRST VOICE

In Donkey Street, so furred with sleep, Dai Bread, Polly Garter, Nogood Boyo, and Lord Cut-Glass sigh before the dawn that is about to be and dream of

DAI BREAD

Harems.

POLLY GARTER

Babies.

NOGOOD BOYO

Nothing.

LORD CUT-GLASS

Tick tock tick tock tick tock tick tock.

Research your own dreams.

Keep a diary of your dreams for a week.

Have you ever had a significant or recurring dream?

What do your dreams reveal about your personal thoughts, wishes and hopes?

Extension:

Write a short piece based on your dreams in the style of Dylan Thomas.