

Do you have to listen to Dylan Thomas?

An orchestral voice

BBC archive audio:

"This is the Welsh Home Service."

Gillian Clarke:

When I was a teenager, my father turned on the radio one evening and told me to listen.

BBC archive audio:

"Under Milk Wood, by Dylan Thomas."

Gillian Clarke:

And in a few minutes I was hooked. The voices were Welsh, the characters were like *my* aunts and uncles in west Wales. They were sad and funny, and familiar. And at the same time, they were human as people everywhere.

I bought this edition of Dylan Thomas's Collected Poems the day I started university and I still treasure it.

Poetry is a kind of spell. You hear it in the silence of the page, repeating phrases to yourself like the "fishing-boat bobbing sea" or the "heron-priested shore".

Dylan Thomas's words can be enjoyed when read silently –

or heard, spoken aloud, in an auditorium like this!

Poetry is word-music. Meaning through sound, through the cadence of the line, the rhythm of the sentence.

But do you really need to *hear* the words for the poetry to live?