

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

People's ideas about death can vary. Some people will say that death is the best way out to end life's problems but others may think that death is not something that can make someone feel better when they are facing problems in their life. Some people "fear being dead, while others are afraid of the actual act of dying" (Fritscher, par.1). In the world of poetry, there are at least two poets, namely Dylan Thomas and Anne Sexton, who dealt with death as their subject, with different interpretation in their poems.

Dylan Thomas was a Welsh poet who lived in the era of World War II. He was a war witness because in that era he worked as a documentary film scriptwriter and served as an aircraft gunner. I am interested in analyzing Thomas' poems because he says, "My poetry is the record of my individual struggle from darkness toward some measure of light" (Liukkonen and Pesonen, par.9). Thomas was also one of the modern poets who helped restore the English poetry to its basic form in its own language. One of the statements about him says, "Rather than using long words derived from foreign languages, Thomas preferred to

impress readers with strong, short words from native English” (“Dylan Thomas Biography,” par. 6). His poems that I analyze are “Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night,” “And Death Shall Have No Dominion” and “The Conversation of Prayer.”

The second poet whose poems I will analyze, Anne Sexton, was a contemporary American poet who began writing poems in 1956. Her poems are said to be “a result of an emotional breakdown that led to serious depression” (“Encyclopedia of World Biography on Anne Sexton,” par. 2). Sexton belonged to the confessional school of poets who wrote about “private experiences with and feelings about death, trauma, depression and relationships . . . , often in an autobiographical manner” (“A Brief Guide to Confessional Poetry,” par. 2). Her poems that I analyze are “Wanting to Die,” “Sylvia’s Death,” and “The Death King.”

In my thesis, I discuss the themes of Thomas’ and Sexton’s poems. I am interested in their poems because they are related to how someone perceives death in his/her life. Theme in poetry is “the central concept developed in a poem” (Reaske 42). To reveal the theme, I analyze Thomas’ and Sexton’s poems through diction, which is defined as “the choice and use of words in literature” (“Diction,” def 2).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In my thesis I am going to answer the following questions:

1. What is the theme of each of the poems?
2. How does the diction used by the poets help reveal the theme?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my discussion is

1. to show the theme of each of the poems;
2. to show how the diction used by the poets help reveal the theme.

### **Method of Research**

I used library research in writing my thesis. First, I read the poems that I had chosen. I then searched for some print and online sources to support my discussion. In the end, I drew a conclusion from the whole discussion.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of four chapters, which are preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Theme Analysis of Dylan Thomas' poems, whereas Chapter Three is the Theme Analysis of Anne Sexton's poems. Finally, Chapter Four is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain Dylan Thomas' and Anne Sexton's poems and the biography of each poet.