

3. The speaker refers to four kinds of “men.” Restate in your own words the description given of each. Should Thomas’s language about them have been less abstract? Why, or why not?
4. What is the effect of climaxing the poem with a reference to “you, my father” (line 16)? If the father had been introduced in the first or second stanzas, would the effect have been quite different? If so, how?
5. What is the effect of the villanelle form? Judging by Thomas’s poem, do you think it is worthwhile for a poet to write in this way, despite the technical challenges of the form? Should teachers of poetry writing push their students to write a villanelle? Explain your reasoning.

### ≡ MAKING COMPARISONS

1. Is this poem an affirmation of life? Could Oliver’s or Donne’s poem be considered as such?
2. Compare the speaker’s attitude in this poem to that in Oliver’s.
3. Which poet seems most at peace with death?

WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA

## On Death, without Exaggeration

Translated by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh

Although she had written several volumes of poetry, Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012) was little known outside of her native Poland until she won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1996. Since then, readers in various countries have come to admire the blend of simplicity, wit, and wisdom in her writing. The Polish version of the following poem appeared in Szymborska’s 1986 book *The People on the Bridge*. Subsequently, Clare Cavanagh included it in their 1995 English translation *Selected Poems*. We present their