# KS3 More about his work

**Reading Text 5 – An extract from *Dylan Thomas – A New Life* by Andrew Lycett, pages 45-46.**

This is an extract from Andrew Lycett’s biography of Dylan Thomas, where he describes Dylan’s camping trip to the Gower peninsula in the summer of 1930, when Dylan was 15.

Note:

**Glyn Thomas** is one of Dylan Thomas’s friends

**D.J. Thomas** is Dylan’s father, who was an English master at Swansea Grammar School

That summer Dylan joined some boys from the Uplands on a camping trip to the Gower peninsula. This was a local rite of passage when the sun beat down and tourists flocked to Swansea Bay. He and his friends took a bus down to Mewslade and pitched their rented Bell tents in a field at Pilton, a mile from the rolling Rhossili strand. So far as any of them could remember, Dylan played his part. He did some fishing and even helped with cooking, but showed no interest when, in return for ham and eggs, his colleagues helped a local farmer with haymaking.

The reason soon became clear. Staying in a cottage in nearby Llangennith were three attractive High School girls who were known to some in the party. One was Evelyn (‘Titch’) Phillips, daughter of an insurance salesman. She had convinced her mother that a spell in the country would aid her revision for the forthcoming exams. She was told she had to wear dresses, not shorts. Before long she had linked up with these boys at a dance in Llangennith, and she and her friends were invited back to the camp. When she went over, she encountered someone she had not met previously. ‘Suddenly I heard someone speaking in a voice such as I had never heard before, and I remember turning to see who owned this voice, and I could see nothing except a couple of boys I already knew and a little shrimp of a boy with light curly hair.’ She asked Glyn Thomas, with whom she was acquainted, about this waif-like creature. She learnt it was Dylan, son of D.J.Thomas, with whom she was familiar because her family also lived in Uplands and her brother Billy had been at the Grammar School.

Although two years older than Dylan, she was immediately captivated by his sense of fun: ‘he really brightened up their camp.’ Since English was on her examination syllabus, he asked if she would like to read some poetry he had written. When she agreed, he gave her a small exercise book, full of jottings in pencil. It was clear that he had been filling this book while the others cut hay. ‘We both lay on our stomachs in the grass and read the poetry,’ Evelyn recalled. ‘I didn’t understand it at all, I must confess.’ She knew about sonnets and the sort of poetry she studied at school. But this was quite different – ‘more poetic’, she felt, leaving a sensation that was even more memorable than seeing it all on the page. Even at that age, Dylan impressed on her that he wanted to become a poet. And he had an added advantage: he was the only person around who could tell her the meaning of the word ‘idiosyncrasy’ which she found in one of her textbooks.

## Tasks

1. Put these events in the text in order, from 1 to 5.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Evelyn Phillips hears Dylan speaking. | □ |
| Dylan goes on a camping trip with his friends. | □ |
| The boys invite the girls back to their camp. | □ |
| Dylan reads his poetry to Evelyn. | □ |
| Dylan’s friends meet the High School girls. | □ |

1. Tick **true** or **false** for each sentence.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **true** | **false** |
| Dylan and his friends went to Gower on the bus. |  |  |
| Dylan didn’t help out with the cooking. |  |  |
| Dylan’s friends helped the farmer but received nothing in return. |  |  |
| Evelyn’s mother told her to wear dresses. |  |  |
| The boys met the girls on Llangennith beach. |  |  |
| Evelyn describes Dylan as a tall boy. |  |  |
| Evelyn thought Dylan was fun. |  |  |

1. Look at the text in the box below.

Underline **2** words – **one** which shows that Evelyn Phillips knew Glyn Thomas, and **one** that she knew of Dylan Thomas’s father.

|  |
| --- |
| She asked Glyn Thomas, with whom she was acquainted, about this waif-like creature. She learnt it was Dylan, son of D.J.Thomas, with whom she was familiar because her family also lived in Uplands and her brother Billy had been at the Grammar School. |

1. **Find and copy** **one** word from the first few lines of the passage which shows that many people went to Swansea Bay when it was sunny and warm.
2. Draw **4** lines to link the words on the left with their meanings on the right.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| encountered |  | feeling |
|  |  |  |
| sensation |  | beach |
|  |  |  |
| forthcoming |  | met |
|  |  |  |
| strand |  | about to happen |

1. Look again at the following section of the text. What does it tell you about the effect which Dylan’s poetry had on Evelyn?

‘We both lay on our stomachs in the grass and read the poetry,’ Evelyn recalled. ‘I didn’t understand it at all, I must confess.’ She knew about sonnets and the sort of poetry she studied at school. But this was quite different – ‘more poetic’, she felt, leaving a sensation that was even more memorable than seeing it all on the page.

1. What do the words **rite of passage** mean in the second sentence of the first paragraph?
2. What does the word **idiosyncrasy** mean in the final sentence?