

Comparing "mid-term break" and "the early purges" essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The two poems I have looked at are both wrote by Seamus Heaney, they both deal with death but in very different ways.

One poem is set in the countryside and shows that death is part of the life there; the other is set in the city and shows how hard a family member dieing is. Both poems are very emotional because one poem involves kittens and the other involves a young child, they are both young and innocent. The first poem is called " The Early Purges"; the word " Purges" means to clear or sort out, this suggests the poem will be about clearing or getting rid of something. The first word of the poem is " I" from this we can tell it is a personal experience; this makes us more involved in the poem.

The poet tells us about when he " first saw kittens drown" this suggests he has seen it happen a lot more since then. The first line goes straight into the theme of the poem the poet might have done this to shock the reader or to just get the poem flowing quickly, also from this line we get a real feeling of what the poem involves the death of the kittens. The word " scraggy" gives the effect of a small, not cared for kitten. It makes us feel sorry for them.

The poet describes the bucket as " frail" this is like the kittens; they are weak, young, innocent and are being thrown around. In this next stanza there is alliteration of the letter S with " soft paws scrapping" and " soon soused" this reinforces the sound of water and since they are being treated so badly it makes us automatically feel sorry for them and question why they are being treated like this. In this stanza there is a rhyming couplet, which is in most stanzas, " din" and " in", the rhyming makes the poem less serious and more like a nursery rhyme. The boy " Dan" is not bothered about the

kittens; we know this because he "slung" the bucket this implies he does this with no care. Also another way we see that "Dan" doesn't care about killing the kitten is that the water was "pumped in" this prolongs the death, it would have been easier and less painful for the kittens if he had put them straight into the water not slowly fill it up.

This gives the effect he is nasty, cruel and heartless. The next stanza starts with a question "Sure isn't it better for them now?" To me this is like he is reassuring himself as well as the poet. He is trying to reassure himself because he might know inside that it is wrong, this makes me question his motives for doing this brutal act if he's not a hundred percent sure about doing it. There is a simile with "Like wet gloves"; the poet is trying to relate something we know the gloves, with something we don't, the kittens drowning. Gloves are always lost and forgotten about; they are not very important and can easily be replaced. Here the kittens are thought of as worthless and not important like gloves are.

To "Dan" the kittens are waste because they are put on the "Dunghill," this shows that on the farm they are worthless. It gives a sad effect because we know kittens as pets but in this poem they are pests. The boy was affected by what he saw as he "sadly hung" this gives the effect he is of guiltiness and shows the boy feels sorry for the kittens. We know the boy is young as he uses the word "sogged" this is a childish word and shows his innocence which relates to the kittens as they were also young and innocent. Throughout the poem the poet is very descriptive, one way we see this is when he describes the kittens as "mealy and crisp", this shows the boy looked

closely at the kittens bodies, it gives the effect of interest as if he is watching
<https://assignbuster.com/comparing-mid-term-break-and-the-early-purges-essay/>

them closely he could be doing this because he feels guilty or because it is a new experience for him. The word "dung" implies the kittens are thought of as waste and leftovers; they are not wanted so they are disposed of.

The next stanza shows the harsh reality of what Dan does the words "trapped" "snared" and "shot" are all brutal words, for a brutal act. It gives a harsh effect as it shows the reality of what happens on a farm to unwanted animals. As the boy grows up his attitude changes towards the killings, this is almost like a disappointment for me, as he did seem to have some morals before. "Still" shows that he has changed and it doesn't matter to him now. He has almost hardened as he has grown up. The puppies were killed in the same way the kittens were but not as much as a prolonged death they were "prodded to drown" this implies they are pushed down; it is not as easy as just putting the water in a bucket.

The words sound harsh but really it is making the death quicker unlike when the kittens were being killed. So this suggests he does still care and does still have some morals, as he doesn't want to prolong the puppy's pain and death. It shows he has realised it has to be done. There is a metaphor with "talk cuts ice" this suggests that in the town everyone is affected by the "prevention of cruelty talk." This shows people in the towns are different to the people in the countryside as they're attitude towards animals is a lot different.

Country people have to kill animals regularly as we know from this poem where as town people do not, that they are affected by the prevention of cruelty talk. On the next line it reinforces that there attitudes are a lot

different " they," this shows they are different and he doesn't feel the same as them. " But" shows the man accepts what they think but he still has to do it. The last line of this poem makes you think about what has happened and what has just been said, " pests have to be kept down" this sums up the poem. The animals or kittens are thought of as " pests" this implies they are worthless.

This sentence also shows how much he has changed " have", he understands it has to be done but when he was younger he did not. If I compare " Mid-term break" with " The Early Purges" I notice straight away that both poems have three lines per stanza except " Mid-term break," has a single line on the end Seamus Heaney might have done this so it stands out and has a greater effect on people, or so that line sticks in peoples mind. The first word in " Mid-term Break" is the same word as " The Early Purges" they both start with " I" this shows they are both personal experiences, this makes us more involved in the poem. In this first stanza there is alliteration of the letter " C" with " college", " counting", " classes", " close" and " o'clock" this slows the poem down and gives the effect of time slowly ticking away as he waits.

We can tell time is going slow as the boy is " counting" the bells this gives the effect of boredom, also it implies he is trying to keep his mind off something, this makes me question why he is there. The bells are " knelling" this is a bell announcing funeral or death, it gives a sombre effect as we think someone has died. We question why his " neighbours" picked him up and drove him home. It is strange neighbours having to pick him up from school; it is remote.

<https://assignbuster.com/comparing-mid-term-break-and-the-early-purges-essay/>

It gives a cold effect, as neighbours are normally people who you are not that friendly with. In this poem we do not go straight into the theme of the poem unlike "The Early Purges" it is in the second stanza we find out someone has died and even later in the poem until we know who and why they have died. Until then we are left questioning what has happened, "father crying" this is strange as it is unusual to see you father crying. The poet relates a lot of things to innocence through out the poem, the baby "cooed" this shows the baby does not understand what is happening around him, and this gives an innocent effect like the kittens had. Innocence is also shown when the boy was "embarrassed." This shows how young the boy is like the boy in "The Early Purges".

The reason he is "embarrassed" is because he is being shown respect from people older than him, where as normally he would show them respect. This gives an effect of awkwardness, and shows how awkward he must feel in this situation. The poet keeps reinforcing how awkward the boy is and how abnormal the situation is, "sorry for my trouble"; this gives a sad effect as it reminds us of his death which reminds us of how sad everyone including the boy must be. The death is well known and even strangers turn up to show there respect, "Whispers" this could be not to interrupt the peace or they do not know the family that well so they don't want to be seen as gossiping at such a sad occasion.

Through out the poem the Seamus Heaney talks more about other peoples feelings rather than his own, he has already talked about his farther and the older men, this suggests that the death has affected him badly as he cant talk about how he feels about it this gives the effect that the pain is still raw

<https://assignbuster.com/comparing-mid-term-break-and-the-early-purges-essay/>

and he couldn't cope with expressing how he feels as it would just be too sad. It is him that has been affected badly, " my mother held my hand", I think his mother did this as to comfort herself and him since she is his mother she knows him well so she would see and feel his pain, she would want to comfort him. His mother also " coughed out angry tearless sighs" this shows she could not cry as she has cried so much she has run out of tears this gives an effect of desperation as she sighs like she is fed up with being upset she just wants to get on with her life but is unable to because the pain of this death is too great. At this point I notice that in this poem lots of people are affected by the death of this child but in " The Early Purges" it is only him who feels sorry for the kittens. The boy is not connecting with the death we know this because he says " the corpse" it is not personal to him, there is a coldness about what he says, he is not identifying with the death this could be because he has been away for six weeks and the last time he saw his brother was when he was running around like a normal young boy. He also does not identify with the room his brother is in.

This makes me feel sorry for him, as he seems to be not coping very well. The poet next uses flowers to show the boy's innocence, " Snowdrops" these flowers have a very short life this is like the young boy who died it is also like the kittens as they were both young when they died, also snowdrops are white this gives the effect of purity and innocence. Once again the poet shows innocence and also purity now by using " candles" they are usually used for birthdays but on this occasion they are used to soothe and comfort, it takes away the harshness of the room, in the poem the boy's candle of life has gone out. I think the word candles are used here because whilst in the

room with the boy it is as if his candle of life is relighting for one last time to say good-bye.

After this time the candle will be blown out and the body buried, symbolizing him not coming back. In this stanza there is alliteration of the letter F this gives a soothing effect. As it is the first time he has seen the young boy in six weeks the way he looks will stand out more to him. The poet uses flowers again but now a "poppy bruise" this flower is not pure like the snowdrop but this flower gives me the effect of bright red blood also the poppy is for remembrance of the people that died World War One, the poet could be using this for remembrance of his brother or for the redness of the bruise. The next line reinforces again how young the child was, it gives a sad effect. On the next line we finally are told how this child died "the bumper knocked him clear" this is a fact; it shows us this was an unnatural death like the death in "The Early Purges".

This gives the effect of sorrow as this boy did not die naturally, his life was taken away from him at such a young age. The last line is abrupt, it makes me think about how the young boy must have been it gives a strong sad effect. This line is like the last line in "The Early Purges" as they both round the poem off and makes you think about what has happened. I think the overall effect of this poem is sadness as a young child has died. This poem is very emotional as the poet explains how everyone is dealing with the death in their own ways, there is a lot of harshness as strangers are involved it gives an uncomfortable effect it is almost intimidating.

I think this second poem is more emotional than the first because the kittens in the first were killed on purpose, to the country people in had to be done but the young boy was killed by accident, it wasn't his time to leave.