

# Mid-term break by seamus heaney

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



I have recently read and studied the poem "Mid Term Break" and this essay I am going to explain in detail how the poet Seamus Heaney uses form, vocabulary and technical devices to help convey his meaning. The title "Mid-Term Break" sounds rather ambiguous, happy and sad all at the same time and has been chosen very well. The title at a first glance seems rather boring and dull but once you have read the whole poem you understand why the poet has chosen these words and why they fit so well in tune with the rest of the poem. I think this is mainly because of the happy and sad meaning involved with the title.

In the opening stanza Heaney tells us how he, "sat all morning in the college sick bay". Which suggests a rather boring time but this develops into a more sad and serious time which is a rather large and serious mood change. He also talks about, "bells knelling", which in itself sums up most of the poem. As well as this he talks about the time and in many people's minds constantly looking at a clock may be a sign of boredom and impatience.

In the next stanza, stanza two, the mood is that of a very serious nature the writer expresses this by using dashes, in the porch I met my father crying-... "I think he does this to create a solemn pause and also to show how hard it was for him to come to terms with what had happen in the recent time that he was away. He also talks about "Big Jim Evans" who is the only named character in the poem. I think the writer does this to show that he was a very close friend of the family. In the first line of the third verse the rhythm is almost like a baby rocking a pram it is also rather 'conversational'. This has been used very well to set the scene.

Heaney says: "The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram" We can see here how Heaney uses happy verbs " cooed" " laughed" and " rocked" to convey a moment of happiness amongst the midst of sadness. Throughout the rest of the verse he talks about being embarrassed which shows his feelings to the men who he was probably meeting for the first time. In the fourth stanza Heaney uses inverted commas for the first and only time during the poem. I think he does this to emphasize those four little words, " sorry for my trouble" as these words have a huge part to play in this stanza and the whole poem.

These words are very sad and they have bad connotations which sum up the whole meaning of the poem. In the next stanza, stanza five, Heaney says: " with the corpse stanced and bandaged by the nurses" This line is very sad and dreary because no-one thinks of a corpse as being something that is happy and the words stanced and bandaged also have bad connotations. This stanza emphasizes the reality of what has happened during the time in which he was away at school. These words are very effective in describing the situation.

In the sixth verse Heaney talks about a new day in which the sense of the poem is a bit calmer he says, " Snowdrops and Candles soothed the bedside" Snowdrops and candles I think are a good way describe the innocence of the young boy. The snowdrop is a white flower and white is a symbol of purity and innocence. Like in the bible the dove is white and a sign that everything will be alright. And the candle is the light of life simulating that of the young

boy. As well as all this Heaney mentions how long it was since he last saw him.

In verse seven, the last triplet, Heaney uses metaphors, alliteration and plosive words, "wearing a poppy bruise" "Four foot box as in his cot" "bumper" These words all stand out and they convey the meaning of the poem very well. The phrase "four foot box as in his cot" shows us just how young the boy was and in a sense shows how much he'll be missed by those who have known him. The final stanza of the poem contains two separate sets of alliteration and is the only time the poem rhymes. With the words clear and year running from stanza seven through to stanza eight the final stanza which is only one line long. "a four foot box a foot for every year" This line contains iambic pentameter.

This tells us that the young boy was only four years old and this line is very effective in getting his message through to the reader. This line is very strong and dramatic but calm at the same time. Overall the structure of the poem contains eight stanzas seven of which contain 3 lines each and the last which I think the strongest contains only one line. Heaney uses alliteration, onomatopoeia, iambic pentameter and metaphorical language and I think he conveys his meaning extremely well.