Seamus heaney's collection 'death of a naturalist'

Experience, Human Nature

Nidhi Ranjalkar English 10 Block E Ms. Wilkins 30/08/2012 DIGGING The poem ' digging' is the first in poet Seamus Heaney's collection ' Death of a Naturalist' (1966). This poem has a free structure, which allows the poet to express his feelings of pride and the value of his as well as his ancestors' work.

The poet may not be following his father and grandfather's footsteps in the area of work which is potato farming but that doesn't mean he does notrespect, value and take pride in the work that they did. This poem clearly reflects the complex feelings of a son who has chosen to break away from thefamilytradition and forge a new path for himself. The author talks about the family's potato farm. Through this poem he shows respect and pride towards their work. He succeeds by painting a scene using different types of imagery.

He uses visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile imageries to paint a picture. This technique makes readers feel present as if they had just stepped into the moist potato field. The title ' Digging' refers to the act of hard labour. The reader can immediately picture a scene of a man hard at work digging the ground. Seamus Heaney is not a farmer. He does not dig the ground for potatoes nor does he work in the hot fields every day. He is an author who uses his pen to dig deep into his surroundings, deep into the emotions and convey them through his writing.

Heaney starts off the poem by comparing his pen to a gun. He uses this image to convey the idea of ' the pen is mightier than the sword. ' He uses this visual imagery to tell his readers that he uses his pen, as his ancestors' used their spade, to make a living. Also by the line " The squat pen rests, as

snug as a gun," we get a feeling that Heaney likes his work and doesn't mind earning his living by writing. Digging in the hot fields is no easy task. It is tiring, frustrating and tough.

Heaney understands this and to show it he uses words like ' gravely ground' and ' straining rump ' where he emphasizes on the adjectives like ' gravely' and ' staining'. When he says " Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds, Bends low" we can visualize an old man with a heavy spade in his hand, sweating, bending low, straining his back, digging. He uses that line to explain how hard his father worked and this line also reflects a bit of his pride for his father who worked tirelessly in the farms every day.

Heaney also uses olfactory imagery to give the readers a feeling of the scene. " The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap of soggy peat…" emanates an odor of potato mould, soggy peat and it helps imagine the scene to understand the poem. By doing this Heaney manages to bring the scene alive and the reader feels as if he is standing near the potato field can smell these odors and the reader's face immediately scrunches up in disgust.

Heaney also uses tactile imagery to give us a sense of touch which helps us to make a connection. " Loving their cool hardness in our hands" shows the readers that he and his ancestors' are satisfied with their work and take pleasure in doing it. The poet talks about loving the cool hardness of the potatoes in his hands. It also shows us the sense ofhappinessand satisfaction experienced by the father and the grandfather after their work has been done and successfully completed. Digging' by Seamus Heaney is a poem based on the different work line between the past and the present

generations and the value ofhard workand determination for all work whether it is ours or not. The poet uses all these imageries to paint a clear scene in our minds which makes us appreciate the poem better. It also gives us a better understanding of what the poet is trying to say. Through his use of imagery, Heaney communicates his ancestors' determination, the advantages of hard work and the importance ofloyaltyto one's family.