

The analysis of the poem "mid-term break" by seamus heaney

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"Mid-term break" is about childhood memories. This poem shows how a child perceives a death, and the thoughts he encountered during this time of tragedy. At first glance, the poem has the child-like feel. Seamus Heaney portrays his emotions without directly referring to them. He has subtly incorporated various elements and techniques to depict the theme of death. Specifically, by use of imagery and tone, Seamus Heaney in his poem "Mid-term break" sets up the atmosphere of grief and helps a reader to empathize with the speaker during his journey from detachment to acceptance of death.

The use of imagery helps to enhance the poem's depth of feeling and reveals dismal settings. The first stanza tells us that the boy sat all morning "in the college sick bay"(1). He is personally detached from his reality since he is focusing on the bell sound. The imagery "bells knelling" (2) immediately suggests an ominous atmosphere. The use of word "knelling" to describe bells, implies a funeral bell. The atmosphere and tension are building up by the second stanza as we learn of the father. The proceeding scene seems emotionless as the poet, on seeing the corpse does not experience an outflow of emotions, unlike his mother's "angry tearless sighs". The poet's impassive description of the corpse "stanced and bandaged by nurses", further asserts his lack of comprehension, inability to react to such situation.

The last image in the poem makes the reader believe that the older brother is going to show some emotion, but he does not. This truly shows how the brother is unable to react to the death. He is still in a state of shock and has not realized what is going on. We also see another member of the family who

does not know what is going on and is impassive towards the death of his brother. Heaney states, " The baby cooed and laughed and rocked to the pram" (7). The older brother and the baby show detachment from brother's death. The older brother had been away at college and was not spending every day with the little boy. During the second and the third stanzas, the reader can sense a change of tone from impassive to mournful. In the final stanzas the atmosphere has changed to one in which the author appears to have understood the tragic circumstances of his brother death.

In the last stanza the narrator uses phrase " A four foot box, a foot for every year". By this quote, the boy is saying that his brother was four years old when he died, the image gives a certain relief and acceptance of his brother death, instead of crying for him, he analyzes mathematically the situation. This image is very effective, it immediately make the reader feel that death is not chaos. " Mid-term" break is clearly a poem about a tragic event in the poet's life. In order to fully express the grief, he uses imagery and tone to show the change in his emotions about brother's death: from isolation to realization. The descriptions and the underlying emotions make the reader feel the desolation and dismal settings of the entire poem.