

Seamus heaney's portrayal of pain and suffering



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Heaney, born 1939 was one of the nine children of Margaret and Patrick Heaney who ran a family farm in Mossbawn, Northern Ireland. Heaney enrolled at Queen's College in 1957 after attending his local town school and opting not to follow in his fathers success of being a farmer.

He took up a position as a lecturer at St. Joseph's College, Belfast 1963! He then went on to achieve a scholarship in English Language and Literature, also devoting spare time to a poetry group. His success in impressing fellow poets, subsequently lead to his poetry being sent to England for publishing in 1964. The following year, Heaney became married to Marie Delvin, who gave him his first son Michael. Later, in 1965, 'Faber and Faber' published "Death of a Naturalist" which earned Heaney such awards as the E.

C Gregory Award and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize! Mid-Term Break " I sat all morning in the college sick bay". My first impressions of this poem was that it was somehow related to a school atmosphere. In seven brief stanzas, Heaney write about his younger brother's death, and how he was taken from school to go to a mourning service. " A four foot box, a foot for every year", indicates that the deceased was only an infant! This was the last line in the poem and an obvious clue to whom Heaney was referring. I think Heaney at the time was confused about the situation and he talks of how people like " Big Jim Evans" commented on the incident in which his brother was killed. " It was a hard blow" is a reassuring fact, implied in effect that the brother could not have helped himself any better than anyone else could have in the same situation.

Heaney mentions a baby. He says that it " cooed and laughed". I think this signifies innocence of how a baby would not be able to appreciate its brother's death, but also that babies aren't expected to either. It is oblivious to a baby as to what and why an occurrence like this is all around it.

The baby is obviously the only being there who is not expected to mourn. Heaney's father, also, holds a similar state of mind like a baby in a sense. He appears to be weak when he thinks about the death of such a loved family member. However, the father unlike a baby is very sorrowful and shows emotion. " He had always taken funerals in his stride", makes me think that this must be the first life loss that has been an upsetting shock to him. " I saw him for the first time in six weeks.

Paler now... This was an image that obviously layed within Heaney's memories, and he finally had the chance to reveal it with expression. Seeing the dead body of someone you love can be disturbing, but for Heaney he thought of it differently as he described the atmosphere " candles soothed the bedside".

My thoughts of a room like that would be depressing unlike Heaney's. I find it a misleading and unusual perspective. The Early Purges My immediate response to this poem was quite shocking! Heaney uses distasteful language " the scraggy wee shits" to describe kittens, and what was to be expected of the treatment towards them. Soft paws scraping like mad", creates disturbing thoughts for me and makes me feel very sympathetic for such innocent creatures. The way Heaney phrases their helplessness creates a sad mood to the poem. Its like Dan Taggart has complete control over the

kittens' lives and he is deciding to throw them away " He sluiced them out on the dung hill, glossy and dead.

" To me, and probably people of a similar society would label this as a cruelty to animals act, but as Heaney says " On well run farms pests have to be kept down". This supposedly implies that most farmers in the same civilisation act on the reduction of any small animals, which will prevent the ruining of their farms. " I just shrug " bloody pups". This line is towards the end of the poem.

Heaney must have become so indulged in this farming procedure that he came to agree that the of disposing of ' pests' was a frequent ' had to be done' task. Personally, I cannot understand how he can adapt to such an attitude, and in the last two stanzas he writes about the animals in the same way Dan Taggart would. Dan, being that much older than Heaney at the time, holds Heaney under the influence that this is the correct thing to do. " Sure isn't it better for them now? " Here Dan is slightly persuasive when he attempts to change Heaney's opinion about his actions with the kittens. This poem holds a structure of how Heaney changes his mind about the deaths of these pests. The first two stanzas obviously make it out that he against the slaughtering and misunderstands Dan's reasons for it.

Then, the three middle stanzas go into more detail about how many more constant occurrences like this there were. And, in the last two stanzas, Heaney's view on the situation is the opposite to his opinion at the beginning. He states that if a farm is to be " well run", such actions must be taken. I think the title has great relevance to the poem itself.

Immediately you can guess by the word 'Purge' that the poem is unlikely to be happy. Limbo Of all Heaney's poems, I have elected Limbo my favourite. I prefer this poem for two main reasons: Firstly, because this is one of the only poems where Heaney does not focus on his personal experiences which is rare in the poetry I've reviewed so far. Secondly because of the strong mood Limbo creates for the reader. It tells of an incident where fishermen caught an infant whilst netting salmon. This draws up many questions such as 'Why would an infant child be in the same waters as salmon?' "An illegitimate spawning" is the answer.

This child's life was obviously so meaningless that it was labelled "illegitimate". The poem goes on to tell of how the child came to death with the salmon, and how its life values are as irrelevant as that of a fish! "As she stood in the shallows ducking him tenderly" is an indication that the reason for the infant's death was its mother. Although putting her baby to death, the word "tenderly" inserts her affection and possible pre-regret of what she is doing. The way in which her wrists are compared to the coldness of gravel only makes me wonder what pain a small helpless child must be concealing.

The baby is also compared "he was a minnow with hooks tearing her open". I did not understand at first, how such a docile being could ever hurt anything, but it was the baby's existence that the disturbed mother could not contain. "she waded in under the sign of her cross". From this I can determine that the mother was obviously religious and held a devotion to her beliefs. She appears shameful in her accomplished sin of killing her child.

I presume she committed suicide, too distraught to go on. Also, " Even Christ's palms, unhealed, smart and cannot fish there. Unchristened tears... " is in somehow related to religious beliefs.

The poor unloved infant was in the end too illegitimate and of course had not been baptised. This means that not even Jesus can save him, as he is even non-existent in God's world! Limbo', being a parallel to purgatory is an ideal title for this poem. It declares that the child belongs nowhere; it has no place or purpose. The child is a non-baptised, unknown nothing and therefore goes to Limbo. As in all three of my focused poems, there has been a sad mood.

I thought they were related in topic quite well, as all of them described the ending of life. ' Mid-Term Break' is all about the end of a child's life, ' Early Purges' sees the end of life for small creatures, and ' Limbo' I find special. I see ' Limbo' as the end of life for both a child and a creature. When the child was born in ' Limbo', it could have seen a chance in life, but as it was unbaptised and put to death without choice, the child became worthless, even more so than the fish it was amongst. Heaney can create an amazing effect on his reader by describing each experience of his life with such impression! The poetry he produces is of a unique quality and he goes into great depth with his words, encouraging an impact on his reader.