

Blackberrying by  
sylvia plath and  
blackberry picking by  
seamus heaney



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Blackberrying by Sylvia Plath and Blackberry Picking by Seamus Heaney are about blackberries. They both have journey motifs which are different to each other and they both write this in a 1st person narrative which suggests these could be autobiographical. They both share a same theme which is talking about nature but they do this in different ways. Sylvia Plath writes about nature in the countryside whereas Seamus Heaney is 'celebrating' nature, also Seamus Heaney writes about how children understand mortality in his poem. Blackberry Picking' is written in free verse which means it has various styles in the poem, but it's written in only 1 stanza.

His poem has journey motif which is learning about mortality and celebrating nature. This poem is in the past tense as it is talking about a memory which means this poem is about the narrator when he was a young child, he does this by using lexical choices that are more childish such as "It wasn't fair" and "I felt like crying", these are the words which children generally use and this is why he has included it into the poem. Blackberrying' is written in 3 stanzas and in free verse. Her poem gives a physical and spiritual journey: the physical journey is that she is going to the sea from a countryside lane; the spiritual journey is that her emotions change through the poem as she goes from being relaxed to being anxious and doesn't seem contented.

This poem is about a grown woman experiencing blackberrying and in the poem she talks about the enclosure of the country lane to the exposure of the sea; this is an inversion which is the complete opposite. Furthermore this poem is written in the present tense and is from an adult's perspective as the poem uses complex imagery which is conveying the feelings of an adult such as "hanging their bluegreen bellies and their wing panes in a Chinese  
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screen,” as she is trying to imagine turning something ugly into something beautiful and trying to form a pretty pattern. This poem also investigates the power of nature by using vivid imagery. In ‘Blackberry – Picking’ Seamus uses quite a lot of similes and metaphors, this maybe because children used similes quite a lot.

He also uses childish onomatopoeias such as “ tinkling”. He uses a caesura near the beginning, “ at first, just one” which isolate words to make it stand out. Seamus uses very simple imagery which is easy for children to imagine whereas Plath uses complex imagery which is harder for children to imagine or only adults can imagine. Plath’s poem starts of calm and relaxed walking through an alley in the countryside, she describes the nature as ‘ friendly’. She uses repetition (“ nothing, nothing”) in the first stanza so she is emphasising. Another thing she is emphasising is “ Big as the ball of my thumb” which is alliteration.

She makes the reader imagine the blackberries have blue-red juices instead of purple. She then goes on having an impossible relationship with the blackberries as she calls the blackberries “ blood sisterhood” which is conceit. Also this allows the reader to imagine a relationship with the blackberries where they give her their juices and she comments back saying “ they must love me” which is an ironic comment but it shows she is amused. In the 2nd stanza she “ cacophonous flocks” which has an allusion hard ‘ c’ sound.

She has disturbed the crows and she compares them with “ bits of burnt paper” – as she is walking she is thinking that the sea is never going to

appear but she is still calm and content. The line (cacophonous flocks) ends with an ellipsis, this means that there is a pause and she is thinking. So she goes from the alley to the expanse of the sea where it is closed in expose. The ending stanza shows Plath doesn't seem contented as she uses a lot of onomatopoeia (such as " sudden" and " slapping") and she tends to use words that have a hard consonant sound.

Heaney's poem is about a childhood memory on picking blackberries. It is almost like a military mission to get the blackberries. He describes how he " hoarded" the blackberries which show it is a childhood memory because children usually try to collect as much as possible. Near the end Heaney starts to learn about mortality when he says " the sweet flesh would turn sour" which he realises that nothing lives forever. I conclude that the two poems are similar because they both talk about blackberries and use a lot of similes, metaphors etc.

.. Also they are both written in free verse, but they are different because the journey motif for both of them is very different. Plath's poem is suitable for adults but not for children as it uses complex imagery whereas Heaney uses simple imagery which is easy for children to imagine.