

# [A comparative study of "the death of a naturalist”](https://assignbuster.com/a-comparative-study-of-the-death-of-a-naturalist/)

Seamus Heaney was born in the townland of Tamnairn at Mossbawn, county Derry, Northern Ireland on 13th April 1939. Heany was the eldest of nine children one of whom died in a road accident. Heaney’s father was a farmer therefore, he lived his life on a farm. Most of his experiences came from the farm. Heany attended school in Anahorish. From this school he won a scholarship to St. Colomb’s college in Londonderry. He then went to Queens college in Belfast, and gained a first class honours degree in English language and literature. He met his wife, Marie Devlin.

He then began his teaching career at St. Thomas’s secondary school he then moved to St. Joseph’s technical college. It was during that time that he developed his interest in poetry. A number of his poems were published in magazines. During his poetic life he married Marie in 1965, they had two sons and a daughter. Seamus Heaney’s first, collections of poems were published in 1966. His first poem “ Death of a naturalist” was instantly accepted as a remarkable work of literature. Seamus Heaney produced a further six collections. Heaney then won the Noble prize for literature in 1995.

William Wordsworth was born in Cumberland in 1770. He went to Hawkshead among the mountains, and later at St. John’s College, Cambridge. He spent his time in France from 1791-1792, at that time was a warm admirer of the French Revolution but was recalled but was recalled to England. In 1795, he moved with his sister Dorothy, to Somerset where he was a neighbour of the poet Coleridge. These two people his sister and poet neighbours had a great influence upon his life and together with Coleridge, they published the highly successful “ Lyrical Ballads” in (1798).

Before this, he wrote “ The Prelude” this was finished in 1805. There were two versions of “ The Prelude”, one was an autobiography and one was a revised poem. Wordsworth became Poet Laureate in 1813, and he died in 1850. Wordsworth was one of those ‘ Romantic’ poets. William Wordsworth was inspired from his past experiences. (“ Death of a naturalist” by Seamus Heaney tells the story of a young boy and his fascination with collecting frogspawn at a flaxdam) The flaxdam is described as a monstrous place and Heaney use’s the words “ Punishing Sun” to portray images of hell in the readers mind.

The flaxdam is a swamp like place with areas of mud. You can tell that the place is hideous because of how Heany describes it. For example, he used words like, ‘ fested’ this meant rotten. So from his descriptive words you really can tell what the flaxdam was like. Heaney described the place very well, “ Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun. ” What Seamus Heaney is trying to say is that the flaxdam was so uneasy that the sun was punishing it. The flaxdam was a monstrous hell like place. The flaxdam was not a pleasant place although Heaney liked to go there as a child.

All bad effects that happened to Heaney were just manifestations of his childhood. Words and phrases such as “ warm thick slobber” in Death of naturalist actually pleased Heaney when he was a child. As you know that “ Death of a naturalist” is about Seamus Heaney’s childhood, in the poem Heaney writes about Frogspawn. The poet’s childhood was based around the flaxdam. Heaney described the frogspawn as, “ Warm thick slobber, grew like clotted water” These types of things go hand in hand with young boys. Heany used those words to indicate how revolting his childhood was.

You could imagine the frogspawn like “ thick spit”. Heaney also used various writing techniques for example in the first stanza he used some alliteration, “ But best of all”. Heaney also used onomatopoeia again in the first stanza, “ Gargled”. Onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like what it is spelt as. Seamus Heaney the put the frogspawn into jars, “ I would fill Jampotfull of the jellied… ” What Heaney was trying to say was that he was going to fill the frogspawn into jam pots/jars. He also indicated the frogspawn as jellied.

Heaney then said that he would put them on windowsills at home, I would fill Jampots of the jellied specks to range on the windowsills at home” What Heaney was trying to say was that he would collect the frogspawn and fill them in Jampots and put the jars on the windowsill and home. Heaney also stated that the frogspawn would also be on the school shelves. Heaney used a childlike language in the first stanza to represent his innocent past. For example the use of, “ Mammy frog” and “ Daddy Frog” clearly shows that Heaney is writing about his childhood.

Again, you can tell that the first stanza is more child like because of how Heaney describes his teacher Miss Walls, Miss Walls would tell us how the daddy frog was called the bullfrog and how he croaked”… Heaney was trying to show that his teacher would teach him about frogs. From the quote above you can see that Heaney was probably quite small, maybe around 4-5 years old. The poet used this type of language because he wanted to show his childhood. The poet made you feel as if you were a child your-self, as everybody has memories from pre-school. In the second stanza there is a change in tone. The atmosphere at the flaxdam was different to how it was in the first stanza this is because Heaney was relating to the fierce flaxdam.

The atmosphere of the flaxdam was completely different to the beginning of the first stanza, “ All year the flaxdam festered”… The above quote means the flaxdam was rotten all year. When it comes to the first stanza and Heaney writes about the frogspawn, the words and phrases that’s he uses are that to disgust the reader. In the second stanza the language is more aggressive it defiantly changes from childlike. In the second stanza Heaney tried to show an area, which was no longer nice anymore. The second stanza showed that Heaney had now grew up and was no longer a child as in the poem in the second stanza has become more in your face!

In the second stanza Heaney discovers that he doesn’t like the flaxdam, everything is different. When Heaney goes back to the flaxdam he encounters angry frogs. The images in that stanza are of warlike. “ Then one hot day when fields were rank with cow dung in the grass the angry frogs invaded the flaxdam”… What Heaney is trying to say is that it was a hot day and the fields stank, but with furious frogs. Heaney also wrote about the warlike images. For example Heaney used words and phrases such, Invaded, ducked, ect… Heaney also used words like grenades, “ Poised like mud grenades”.

What Heaney is trying to say is that the frogs sat there waiting to go off. Thus the word grenade was used. Another word/phrase Heaney used to describe the frogs was obscene threats. “ The slap and plop were obscene threats”. What Heaney is trying to say is the sounds what the frogs were making were to intimidate the person. Heaney feels threatened in the flaxdam as the frogs become warlike. War like meaning they were acting as if they were at war. In the poem there are quotes like, “ Gross Bellied” What the author is trying to say is that the frog’s stomachs are really fat.

In the poem the author uses various writing techniques, one of these techniques are onomatopoeia, this is something that’s sounds like it, for example “ slap, bang and wallop”. These are words that are sounded like what they say. The use of words that the author used is frightening to the boy. The quote in the poem, “ Their blunt heads farting” What the author is trying to say is that the frog’s heads had really bad odour, this is most probably why Heaney used this type of quote. The experience with the frogs has made Heaney feel much different, his view has totally changed.

As Heaney has grown up you could tell that the way in which his writing technique had changed. Heaney’s poem “ Death of a naturalist” is about how nature can be unexpected and frightening at times. This poem shows how unexpected nature is, for example in the second stanza where it shows how the frogs and how war like they have become. Also the poem shows how growing up from childhood to adult. The poem also says that life when you start it is very much fun, but as you get older life isn’t as nice, like in the poem in the second stanza, it shows how nasty and how warlike the frogs were.

This to an adult is quite intimidating but for a child its quite fun. The poem “ The Prelude” by William Wordsworth is a poem about another boy who is in nature and steals a boat, and tries it out in nature, and after it becomes daunting to him. It’s also like Heaney’s poem where the powerful effects of nature and the uncertainty of growing up (Becoming mature). The two poems are very similar because they’re both in the situation where nature is involved and not forgetting childhood. After looking at the beginning of the poem “ The Prelude” the atmosphere at the start was calm and peaceful.

I say calm and peaceful because the boy stole a boat but yes you could say that was calm because the boy had some fun in stealing, one side of his mind made him feel really good but another side of his mind made him feel really bad. As the boy stole the boat he felt innocent there wasn’t much of a threat. He was actually comfortable with what he was doing. This is very different in Heaney’s poem, because Heaney described it as a hell like place. This was completely different if you compared it to William Wordsworth’s poem.

The beginning of “ The Prelude” is peaceful, One summer evening (led by her) A little boat tied to a willow tree within a rocky cave, its usual home”. The above quote shows that the area was peaceful and there was not a threat. In the first stanza of “ The Prelude” there is a quote, “ It was an act of stealth and troubled pleasure”. What the author is trying to say is that the boy knows its wrong but feels ‘ trouble pleasure’. Up to line 76 In William Wordsworth’s poem, the poet feels threatened, this is because he describes the ‘ huge black peak’. You can tell that Wordsworth feels threatened because he used the word ‘ huge’ more than once.

This type of writing technique is called personification. Personification is a kind of metaphor in which a passage is spoken of as if it were a person. In William Wordsworths poem there is a change in tone half way through the poem. The change is when William Wordsworth starts to talk about the huge peak, the huge peak represented stress and because the peak was black it was also threatening. Also the way the context of the language changed. The atmosphere changed and it was very similar to Seamus Heaney’s. The atmosphere was somewhat evil.

Most of the language after the huge peak was a little repetitive this was mostly due to the panic in the poem. In ‘ The Prelude’, there is a use of personification. Personification is a particular kind of metaphor in which a thing is spoken of as if it were a person. “ A Huge peak, black and huge. As if with voluntary power instinct up reared its head”. In the stanza, the huge peak is described like a monster. This is because it was getting closer to him, like guilt. Just like in Heaney’s poem, the frogs behaved monstrous too. Heaney called the frogs, ‘ great slime kings’ and felt that they would ‘ clutch’ him.

Wordsworth felt that it was one big experience. “ And serious mood; but after I had seen that’s spectacle, for many days, my brain worked with a dim and undetermined sense of unknown modes of being o’er my thoughts”. What the above quote is trying to say is that, Wordsworth had a serious mood after the ‘ huge peak’. Going towards the end of Heaney’s poem, you could clearly see that the experience with frogs has affected him. Heaney at the start of the poem didn’t know much about nature. But as he had grown up he had seen nature to be bad.

Heaney has learnt that things as a child are very different to when you grow older. This is very similar to Wordsworths poem. This is because at the start the boy steals the boat. But after a while, well as he encounters nature and becomes mature he learns to regret what he has done. As a child you may think that it’s OK to explore but as you grow older things can change a lot. The proper meaning of childhood is to live life to the maximum. This is very similar to Heaney’s poem. This is also similar with Wordsworth’s poem. After reading the both poems, ‘ Death of a naturalist’ and ‘ The Prelude’

I have found out that they both contain the feeling of childhood and that the two authors write about there own past. This is the same even though the poets had a huge time difference. The two authors wrote about their childhoods the two poems always started out as an innocent child and then growing up as an adult. The two poems compare very closely together as the share the sense of childhood to adult. The poem by Seamus Heaney ‘ Death of a naturalist’ was about a young boy and his love for nature. The poem near the end shows that he begins to hate the frogs.

This is the big step from childhood to adult. In the poem ‘ The Prelude’ it starts off when a young boy steals a boat, all is well but he then realized that it was wrong then the guilt began to haunt him. This guilt was when the boy has moved from child to adult. As you can see the way the way the two poems move is much the same and not much between them. Basically you start off young and you do as you please, but as you grow older you see the things that seem to be fun more in a different way or view. Things in an adults eyes are more in your face, but in a child’s eyes its easier going.