

# 'digging' and 'follower' by seamus heaney essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



In this essay I will be analysing 'Digging' and 'Follower' both by Seamus Heaney. The poems which relates back to Seamus Heaney's past memories which he had experienced when he was at a younger age, they are memories of him and his father and their relationship. From the poem we can interpret that he was brought up on a potato farm and in many of his other poems he relates to this, this suggests that perhaps he is expressing the family's traditions and enjoyed it. The poem 'Follower' shows more in the relationship, between Heaney and his family.

'Follower' can interpret that Heaney was brought up in the farm land with his family and also express this with other poems which suggests that he enjoyed farming. 'Digging and rising to his plod' this shows that his father has not only physical skills but mental skills such as techniques. 'His shoulders like a full sail strung between the shafts and the furrow' emphasises how powerful and vast he appeared to Heaney as a child. On the other hand, in 'Digging' the poet shows his respect for the hard physical work of digging as he reflects on his father and grandfather although he has other interest.

For example 'between my finger and my thumb the squat pen rests; snug as a gun' the quote is the beginning of the poem. It begins with the speaker at his desk, his pen on the edge to start writing. He gets distracted by the noise of his father outside digging and it sends the speaker into a series of memories to when he was young. The memories go even further when his grandfather was digging as a peat harvester. Eventually the speaker snaps out of his daydream, and continues working on his paper. On the second

stanza the main thing is Heaney's father digging outside behind watching his father dig outside the window. The 'gravelly ground' has alliteration with the 'g' which gives off a harsh sound that the spade makes when it enters the ground. The poet takes us, to a time when Heaney was younger, and he was digging in the 'potato drills' farming, for his livelihood. He sounds skilled at his job as Heaney describes his actions which, the word 'nestled' making the spade sound at home against his boot. However, in 'Follower'.....(to be continued)

The tones of the poems, in 'Follower' is quiet obvious that when Heaney was young he was in admiration of his father. As we can tell that the poem 'Follower' is one of his poems which relate to his past life and childhood. The structure of this poem is that it has four lines in each stanza and in total there are six stanzas the imagery in this poem is based on his father's appearance, for example he wrote 'his shoulders globed like a full sail strung Between the shafts and the furrow' this meant that his father looked like a full sail strung from far and perhaps the wind was blowing so therefore his shirt may of looked like a sail strung on a windy day. With the connection to a sail of a ship, it shows the Seamus Heaney is trying to tell the follower about his relationship between his father and him but that he also looks up to his father.

Both poems suggest a close relationship between Heaney and his father, when Heaney was a child. Heaney remembers in 'Follower' as he 'stumbled in his hob-nailed wake'. Also in 'Digging' Heaney tells the reader that 'Once I carried him milk'. This link that enabled him to watch his father and

grandfather so closely shows Heaney's admiration in his attempt to 'grow up and plough' and be like his father. However, in the last stanza of 'Follower' Heaney reveals a change in his relationship with his father. The change into present tense as he says 'today it is my father who keeps stumbling' demonstrates the change in roles over time. The similarities in the subject matter we can see many things and these similarities suggest the endurance from 'Digging' to 'Follower.' Both contain childhood memories, mainly of his father and references to digging. In 'Digging' we can see how he looks down on his father digging in the garden and this moment takes him back but Heaney realizes that in choosing 'the squat pen' over 'the spade' he is in fact 'digging' up memories of his relatives, and therefore allowing the process of the historical past giving meaning to the present. He takes a different path which doesn't involve digging but he enjoys writing about it and expressing the family tradition.

'I was a nuisance, tripping, falling, Yapping always. But today It is my father who keeps stumbling' Heaney saw himself as a 'nuisance, tripping, falling, yapping always' but this is followed by a change as we move back to the present to discover it is Heaney's father who is a nuisance to him, 'stumbling behind me', a reminder that we all grow old. . "Follower" is a poem which strongly relates to Heaney's past life. The poem also suggests the theme of growth, at the beginning of the poem he is a young boy, who looks up to his father. However, by the end of the poem it is his father who needs help from his son. However, in 'Digging' until the end Heaney was writing about his father and grandfather and all their persistent digging. 'but

I've no spade to follow men like them' Based on how much we know that the speaker is admired by his father and grandfather and we would suppose that the speaker would grow to be a digger. But we learn that the speaker is completely different compare to his family because he doesn't have a tool for digging. So without spade, our speaker is not a potato farmer or peat harvester. He's something entirely different.

In conclusion, I think that ' Follower' shows more in the relationship, between Heaney and his family. ' Follower' can interpret that Heaney was brought up in the farm land with his family and also express this with other poems which suggests that he enjoyed farming. ' Digging and rising to his plod' this shows that his father has not only physical skills but mental skills such as techniques. ' His shoulders like a full sail strung between the shafts and the furrow' emphasises how powerful and vast he appeared to Heaney as a child. Unlike digging is more about the admiration of his father and grandfather but isn't so strongly on the subject matter of relationship. Also in ' Follower' it talks more about when Heaney and his father were in the farm digging whereas in ' Digging' it most talks about how when he was younger he saw his father doing the farming but he only saw his father have the experience.