

# Seamus heaney

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



? Write a close analysis of Doan explaining how the poet used natural imagery and the structure of the poem to convey the themes of loss of childhood innocence and the formulation of adult identity. How typical are the poems of the collection *Death Of A Naturalist* in terms of representation of these themes. The two poems I will be writing about are 'Death Of A Naturalist' and 'Blackberry Picking' these poems are both written by Seamus Heaney.

Both of these poems have similarities in regards to natural imagery and the structure showing the themes of loss of childhood innocence and formulation of adult identities. The structures of both poems are that the first stanzas are longer than the last stanzas. This first stanza also shows that this was the time that Heaney was a child. In *Death Of A Naturalist* it shows that his childhood was happy 'Here every spring I would fill jampotfuls' the childlike language used in this line shows the childlike characteristics and enthusiasm which enables the reader to engage in the nostalgic feeling this poem brings.

In *Blackberry Pickings* the nostalgic feeling is also presented 'you ate the first one and its flesh was sweet' both of the lines from each poem has connotations of the positive and happiness Heaney was in at the time of his childhood years. There is also the use of enjambment in both poems. In *Blackberry Picking*, the use of enjambment disrupts the iambic pentameter rhythmic pattern 'Like thickened wine : summer's blood was in it'.

In *Death Of A Naturalist*, the enjambment emphasises that the event occurs annually and shows that it is continuous 'the fattening dots burst in to nimble-swimming tadpoles' this gives us visual imagery, an explosion of life. The poem also has iambic pentameter like *Blackberry Picking*. In the second

stanza of each poem, they are much shorter than the first and it is a lot more negative compared to the first stanza. It is here that Heaney has grown up and looked back on his childhood himself and compared it to how he sees it all now. In a sense Heaney now sees it as something negative and perhaps no longer familiar or unfair.

This is seen in *Death Of A Naturalist* 'To a coarse croaking I had not heard before' Heaney disregards the hearing of frogs, which he used to spend much of his time collecting frogspawn. Here the change from childhood is that Heaney possibly blocked out the sounds that frogs make, due to him growing up and growing out of the habit of collecting frogspawn. In *Blackberry Picking* the loss of childhood innocence in the second stanza is shown in a very similar way like *Death Of A Naturalist*, it represents the desire once we get what we want.

'I always felt like crying it wasn't fair' when he looks back on it he realised that he was only setting himself up for disappointment, but as a child Heaney never realised that, only when it happened. When you're an adult you tend to be quite cynical and see the flaws in everything, you're very critical, whereas, as a child you always see the good in everything. Heaney uses natural imagery as a metaphor to depict his loss of innocence throughout both poems. The use of natural imagery goes back to the farm life that Heaney had which inspired him to use in his poems.

In *Blackberry Picking* I believe the use of blackberries is a metaphor for virginity, it could either be his or his partner he is trying to pursue, that's probably why he uses words such as 'flesh' to personify them. In *Death Of A Naturalist* use of natural imagery shows how in the beginning he spent more

time doing something he loved until someone open his eyes or he realises that what he is doing is wrong or he just grows out of this phase and looking back Heaney is ashamed and possibly guilty of what he did.