

How heaney use's language and essay



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" Death of a Naturalist" Seamus Heaney's first collection of poetry was published in 1966, while he was a lecturer at Queens University.

It was immediately accepted as a unique and remarkable work of literature. Seamus Heaney was just twenty-seven years old. The work is considered with the loss of childhood innocence and the moment into adulthood and all that such a journey includes. The poem gives reason to the reader why the poet has become a writer, his admiration for his ancestors and the young Seamus Haney's view of nature. Poems in " Death of a Naturalist" are all concerned with the themes of childhood and loss of innocence.

Heaney writes about many aspects of his life as a child including working with his father - " follower"- watching his father and grand father work - " Digging" - going " blackberry picking" and seeing kittens drown - " Early purges". Heaney's poems are centred around the rural Irish landscape of his childhood, and the time honoured traditions that are an everyday part of Irish peasant life. His poems often convey a feeling of guilt, because they are quite negative and dark, depicting his breaking of this tradition. One of the reasons why he is so widely know is because he makes the text come alive with his feelings, in spite of the fact that his techniques are quite complicated. He uses structural techniques to emphasise his point. For example, in " Blackberry Picking" there is a formal, mechanical structure, just like the annual ritual of going out to pick blackberries.

In all of his poems he tries to convey his feelings about his experience and also how he was changed as a result of them. But it is not only his techniques, which his poems have in common. His mood-changes prevail. In

" The Early Purges", the first half of the poem sees Heaney as a vulnerable child: " I was six when I first saw...

" and " Suddenly frightened... " While, in the second half he is looking back negatively as an adult: " Until I forgot them...

Another structural technique, which Heaney uses, is enjambement, where the lines of the poem run into each other, creating a fluid text for the reader. In " Blackberry Picking", we again notice the use of the child theme in the first verse. As a child picking blackberries, he thinks of nothing else. His entire world revolves around blackberries and he is willing to sacrifice everything for his obsession: " Sent us out with milk-cans, pea tins, jam pots where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots. For instance, he is not deterred by the hard labour suggested by the onomatopoeia of the hard " k" sounds in the line: " We trekked and picked.

.. " In the poem " Digging" Heaney is seeing his father dig, which reminds him of his childhood and how his father dug up potatoes. His father is described digging with great skill " by God the old man could handle a spade". The job ran through the family to his grand father, His father had dug and with great skill " just like his old man". Heaney mentions his grandfather with pride " My grandfather cut more turf in a day than any other man on Toner's bog.

The poem gives some reasons why Heaney has become a writer " But I've no spade to follow men like them", " Between my finger and my thumb, the squat pen rests. I'll dig with it. " He has replaced the spade with the pen; meaning that he will make his family proud by becoming a writer and

breaking the family tradition. Heaney's use of language and poetic technique helps bring you into the poem and the meaning, for example "I look down" an example of enjambement (run on lines, making you want to read on". In his language Heaney uses metaphor for example "Roots" as a metaphor for Irish history and language. Sounds are used, such as "Clean rasping sound" another example of enjambement, he does this to bring you into the poem and read on with interest.

Sight "I look down" e. g. of enjambement. Touch "Loving their cool hardness in". These are all forms of examples of enjambement. He uses this technique a lot in his poems; it helps the reader to understand the poem and making you want to read on further.

The theme of childhood in this poem is of Heaney taking his grandfather milk and watching them digging when he was at a younger age. But in "Blackberry-picking" this happy childish image is contrasted in the second verse by a more adult theme, where reality and depression take a more important place in the verse, as we can see with the alliteration of the "f" sounds in the words "fresh", "fungus", "fruit" and "fermented", creating a feeling of pressure that tells us of the intensity of Heaney's thoughts and that he is outraged that all his efforts have come to nothing. If we look at the second verse in more detail, we see that what causes all this horror and disappointment is the fungus, which can be used as a symbol for the beginning of adulthood throughout the journey of life and that this fungus has taken away his happiness like a spreading cancer, which links back to the guilt Heaney feels for leaving the country ways to become a writer.

Another common technique he uses to portray the feeling of childhood in the first verse and of adulthood in the second is his use of senses.

He combines sensory words, such as the "scratching" thorns and the "smelling" rot of the fungus, giving the reader a clear image. He uses bleak words such as "bleached" and "scratched" and half rhymes, for instance in the second verse: "We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre. But when the bath was filled we found a fur, a rat grey fungus glutting on our cache. The juice was stinking too. Once of the bush..

. " This takes away the edge of the optimistic happy poem. The structure of the poem on one hand is very formal, like a sonnet. This symbolises the mechanical decision to go out and pick blackberries every year. But there is no structure to the lines. They look haphazard on the page.

There are some iambic rhythms randomly splattered around the text, such as: "But when the bath was full we found a fur..." This symbolises the random of picking of the blackberries.

The death-dealing fungus is personified and given a bad image (a "rat"), contaminated and disease-ridden, a punishment for one of the seven deadly sins — gluttony. The blackberries were hoarded away, to keep them safe. Disappointment follows the fungus when the blackberries go off "stinking" and "fermenting". These are violent actions of the fungus as it devours the blackberries, symbolising the violence of farms. The guilt of the second verse is viewed as an adult, as children tend not to feel guilt and Heaney is looking back.

There is a shameful sense of waste, as the fungus has massacred the blackberries. Heaney depicts a happy childhood, with extremes of emotions over pointless things and being free to act as he pleased. Blackberry picking is like a selfish ritual. His poems reflect that his childhood was a lonely process, learning the hard lessons of life he has to go through, which are sometimes painful.

The next poem "The Early Purges" disorientates us, we don't know the context, and we don't know whether the killing of the kittens is just or sick. The first line is very matter of fact: "I was six when I first saw kittens drown" There is no euphemism. This tells us he is not sentimental, as children don't understand, they don't work with logic, but with gut reaction. He emphasises the vulnerability and fragility of the kittens by using adjectives such as "frail" and "soft". He also displays a lack of respect for them by calling them "scraggy wee shits".

He describes the act of drowning by using verbs like "pitching", "slung" and "scraping", making them sound more desperate. He further disrespects the kittens by their disposition: "he sluiced them out on the dung hill..."

"The first three verses give no clue as to how he felt. But the kittens symbolise Heaney as a child being young and vulnerable. Why should he have life and the kittens not? The line: "until I forgot them" shows again Heaney's theme of childhood selfishness with a short attention span. The mood then changes in verse five. He has matured since the first time he saw the kittens drown.

He is trying to feel like he wants Dan Taggart to kill things, but he actually doesn't, as he says: " Still living with false sentiments. " He has changed, because if he is going to be a farmer, he has to learn to live with this. Death on a farm is a way of life: " But on well run-farms pests have to be kept down. " The delayed fear mentioned in verse four when Heaney says: " Suddenly frightened" comes from childhood innocence, the fear of helplessness, of not being able to do anything. He has no energy, hanging around the yard with fading optimism.