

# Mid term break and out, out poems: main differences and similarities

[Literature](#)



## Poetry Comparison Essay

### Mid Term Break by Seamus Heaney with Out, Out by Robert Frost

The painful account of the death of a child is the subject of both poems, however, it is dealt very differently by each poet. The first poem, entitled 'Mid Term Break', was written by Seamus Heaney in remembrance of the death of his younger brother. Likewise, Robert Frost's poem which is entitled 'Out, out' speaks of how a young boy's life was silenced due to the irresponsible actions of his employers and elders. Although both poems are concerned with the same subject; there is a clear contrast of tone between the two writers. Heaney's poem is elegiac and portrays a sombre tone as it is written in the style of a speech that is being spoken by the poet himself at his younger brother's funeral. However, Frost's poem expresses the anger that the poet feels towards the needless death of a young boy as a result of him being allowed to work with a chain saw. Frost structures his poem as if he is presenting a case at court and trying to persuade the jury of how reckless the saw mill employers have been. He achieves this by the use of his opening words at the beginning of his sentences such as 'And' and 'As it'. In the final part of the poem, he starts his sentence with 'So.' which encourages the reader to pause and listen carefully to what's coming next in the poem. Additionally, it suggests that the poet is closing his case and reaching his conclusion about the boy's death. The above factors suggest there is a clear link in the structure of the poems as they are both written in the form of speeches.

In the poem 'Out, out', Frost uses the form of the poem to help us visualize a saw mill. He does this by using run on lines and doesn't include any

<https://assignbuster.com/mid-term-break-and-out-out-poems-main-differences-and-similarities/>

stanzas in his poem. This mimics the action of sawing wood, as a saw grinding along a tree trunk is one long action. The run on lines also creates a sense of urgency as Frost is portraying his anxiousness in order to tell his story and persuade the jury of the wrongfulness of the young boy's death. Moreover, the poet uses long and short lines in order to echo and let the audience visualize the forward and backward action of sawing wood through the way he structures his poem. Additionally, the staccato lines represent a heart monitor machine which gives the sense of a grim medical emergency. In comparison, Heaney's poem is entirely formed of three lined stanzas apart from the last line.:

“ No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear”

“ A four-foot box, a foot for every year”

The gap between the last two lines of the poem implies that a car has knocked the final line of the poem clear. Heaney uses this clear visual form to remind the reader of his younger brother's heart-breaking cause of death as he was brutally hit by a speeding vehicle.

Moving onwards, Seamus Heaney uses simple language in order to emphasize the effect of certain words and phrases; for example: ' tearless sighs' and ' a poppy bruise'. The poet also uses long stanzas and sentences in order give the impression that he has endured a very long and painful day as he has been constantly watching the clock. This is shown as the poet regularly states the time; for example: “ At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home” and “ At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived”. Additionally, Seamus

Heaney uses euphemistic language in order to remind the reader of how excruciatingly painful it is for him to talk about his brother's death. By using this technique, it softens the blow of his pain as it allows him to talk about the subject without being explicit. An example of this is the phrase 'hard blow' as it suggests the cause of the poet's brother's death. The sentence implies that he was involved in a terrible car crash and died as a result of immense impact from a speeding vehicle. Additionally, the use of the word "hard" highlights how emotionally challenging the accident was for the poet's family.

In contrast to this, Frost uses very hard and descriptive language in order to convey his anger and the violence of the young boy's death. This is highlighted immediately in the opening sentence: "The buzz saw snarled and rattled". The animal imagery written through the use of "snarled" and "rattled" implies the saw to be a predator. Also, the alliteration of the 's' sounds add to the urgency of the situation and foreshadows the horrific events that are about to unfold throughout the poem. Additionally, as the poet repeats the lines thorough the first part if the poem it represents the backwards and forwards action of the chilling saw and suggests that something awful may be about to happen to the young boy.

In likewise to Heaney, Frost uses euphemisms to describe the hand of the boy being cut off by writing "Neither refused the meeting, but the hand!" The poet very cleverly describes the saw cutting the boy's hand cleanly off without actually stating these specific words in the poem. Also, the use of

the short sentence “ but the hand” emphasizes the poet’s shock as it implies that he is stressed and had little time to think.

In the same way as Heaney carefully picks out specific words, Frost uses particular words that convey a lot of meaning. An example of this is “ The boy’s first outcry was a rueful laugh,”. The poet’s use of language is unexpected as you’d predict the boy to be shrieking in pain. Also, the word ‘ rueful’ would be used to describe the reaction of a more mature person. It gives the impression that the boy is older than his years and that people often forget that he’s only a child working in an adult’s environment.

Both Heaney and Frost uses sensory imagery all the way through their work. Heaney starts his poem with auditory images, for example; ‘ Bells Knelling’, ‘ My father crying’ and develops this technique further in his poem by writing ‘ Whispers’ and ‘ Tearless sighing’. The sounds convey and maintain the depressed and sad theme of the event in the poem. Additionally, Heaney uses visual imagery in order to create a sombre tone throughout his work. This technique is highlighted when the poet writes “ Snowdrops and candles soothed the bedside”. Snowdrops are very fragile and pure flowers; they only blossom for a short period of time which emphasise the fact that the poet’s brother only lived for a brief duration of what could have been a long and meaningful life. Also, candles are used during religious ceremonies which paints a picture of the funeral venue. Another example of effective imagery in the poem is the way he describes his brother’s injury. “ Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple” He softens the image by using a flower which makes the situation more bearable for the poet to describe. Additionally, the

colour of the poppy conveys an image of heavy bleeding and significant bruising for the reader in a vivid way.

Frost also uses a range of sensory images to express his feelings and create a sense of urgency through out the poem. For example, we can hear the saw's 'snarling' and 'rattling' and can smell the 'sweet scented' sticks of wood. Frost uses very contrasting imagery to enhance the reader's picture of the bleakness of the saw mill: "Five mountain ranges one behind the other under the sunset far into Vermont". The contrast in the idyllic landscape highlights the bleak working conditions in the young boy's work place and gives the reader an insight into the harsh way that labour workers were treated. Equally to Heaney, Frost uses fantastic auditory imagery throughout his poem. However, the crucial element that causes Frost's description of the young boy's death to be so successful is the lack of sounds, rather than a burst of them. "Little-Less-Nothing!" The silence through out the phrase signifies death, and so the winding down of sensory imagery here alerts us to death's presence.

With regard to the rhyme in both poems, 'Mid Term Break' contains a noticeable and effective use of rhyming in it's opening stanza. By using the phrase "bells knelling", it associates the coming events with death as knelling is often an adjective that's used to describe the chime of a funeral bell. The use of the adjective plays the role of foreshadowing the tragic event that's about to unfold throughout the poem. Additionally, the internal rhyme between "bells" and "knelling" emphasises the point even further. On the contrary, Frost's poem is written in blank-verse which adds to the sense that

the poem is a speech being given in court. Unlike Heaney's poem, it does not include and rhyme or rhythm in order to maintain the sense of urgency through out the poem and to keep the story flowing through out his work.

Finally, Heaney uses a contrast in his poem's tone in order to create a sense of innocents. "The baby cooed and laughed". It is very incongruous to hear a baby laughing in the midst of a dismal funeral and the diversity in tone shows the lack of the baby's understanding. It seems it is the adults who are most upset and the baby, innocent of all knowledge, reacts normally and life goes on. As for Frost, the poet uses the tone of his poem in order to develop and to further inform the reader about his feelings towards the poems

events. "And they, since they were not the dead, turned to their affairs"

Unlike Heaney's bleak and miserable theme, Frost adopts a cold tone in the line above in order to imply his beliefs about the fact that there wasn't enough grieving or compassion shown about the boy. Also, the phrase shows how the poet attributes blame to the boy's employers for his death as they forced him to work with adult's equipment and didn't show an ounce of concern for his welfare or injuries. Additionally, the clipped sentences in the line above emphasize how the poet is angry about the fact that young boys who had a whole life to live and enjoy were sent away to do men's work.

To conclude, I believe both poems to have similar features of technique as they both deal with the same subject; which is the death of a child. However, Frost uses very hard and descriptive language in order to convey his anger and the violence of the young boy's death whereas Heaney uses simple language in order to emphasize the effect of certain words and phrases and

to create a sense of innocent through out the poem. Frosts creates the voice and an angry adult while Heaney speakes from the perspective of young and confused boy.