

Heaney Coursework

Good practice

Main problems

- **Many of you do not state which poems you are quoting from, you must say!**
- **You must try to mention something about Heaney himself, not much, just a sentence, but something.**
- **You must plan properly and organise your ideas, some essays were very jumbled up!**
- **Don't use too many paragraphs, it should work out roughly at one point per paragraph.**

Main Problems 2 - Quotes

- **If you put quotes in you must explain them and you also must introduce them. Heaney writes “...” or Heaney says “...” or Heaney shows this by saying “...”.**
- **Many of you do not explain what your quotes are about, this is essential. You must describe what is happening in any quote you use. If you say, “great slime kings” you must explain that Heaney is referring to the frogs as great slime kings because he feels that nature is superior to him etc etc.**

Main Problems 3

- **You must provide explanations. P,E is no good without the other E!! The explanation is crucial and to just say that something is effective is not enough. You must explore the points you make.**
- **You must always make comparisons or contrasts, you can only reach the better grades if you compare or contrast everything.**

**POINT, EVIDENCE,
EXPLANATION**

POINT, EVIDENCE, EXPLANATION

Point

Heaney uses military metaphors in both poems to describe nature.

Evidence

In *Storm on the Island* Heaney describes the storm like an air raid, he says that the wind “dives and strafes”, here Heaney is saying the wind is like gun fire in an air raid diving and strafing at the people. He describes it as an air attack as the weather comes from the air.

Continued

- Evidence continued

In *Death of Naturalist*, when describing how he comes face to face with the frogs he describes the encounter like a battle, he says that the frogs were “poised like mud grenades” and that the frogs had “invaded the flax dam”. This metaphor compares the mass of frogs to a land attack.

Continued

- Explanation

Heaney uses metaphorical language to reveal his opinion that man is in a perpetual battle with nature. The military symbolism is effective because it emphasises Heaney's battle with nature and in *Death of a Naturalist* it also reflects his personal battle with his fear.

So what we do is.....

1. Make our point.
2. Find evidence from one poem and explore it.
3. Find comparable or contrasting evidence from the other poem and explore it.
4. Provide an explanation of what Heaney was trying to do, what he was trying to show with regard to his attitude to nature.

**Your really good
examples!!!!**

In this essay I will examine Seamus Heaney's attitude to nature in the poems 'Storm on the Island' and 'Death of a Naturalist'. These two poems are both linked very strongly to nature and to Heaney's life in rural Northern Ireland. I will highlight the comparing and contrasting points of these two poems.

In 'Storm on the Island', Heaney describes how the people on the island are being attacked by nature, because of the storm. They are unprotected on this island and are defenceless at the hands of the storm. In 'Death of a Naturalist', Heaney describes his own attitude towards nature, through different stages through his life.

In both these poems Seamus Heaney's attitude to nature changes. In 'Storm on the Island', Heaney's attitude to nature shifts towards the sea. He writes, "You might think the sea is company." Here the poet is saying that the sea may be your friend, but later on in the poem there is a shift in his attitude towards the sea, "The flung spray hits the very windows, spits like a tame cat turned savage." Here the poet is saying the sea's behaviour has completely changed and because of this the sea cannot be trusted.

In comparison, in the poem 'Death of a Naturalist', Heaney's attitude changes towards the frogs. In the first stanza, a young Heaney would greatly enjoy watching the frogspawn grow. "I would fill jam pots of the jellied specks to range on window-sills at home, On shelves at school, and wait and watch until the fattening dots burst into nimble swimming tadpoles". Here, the young Heaney is fascinated by these amphibians, watching them grow and evolve. Later on in the poem, in the second stanza, an older Heaney is confronted by lots of "angry frogs". He writes, "Then one hot day when fields were rank With coddung in the grass the angry frogs Invaded the flax dam." *Now Heaney is scared by these creatures, where once he was fascinated by them.*

One similarity between 'Storm on the Island' and 'Death of a Naturalist' is that both poems show that nature is more powerful than man, a good example of this in 'Death of a Naturalist' is that he uses the phrase "great slime kings". I think he uses this to create the effect that the frogs are sitting on their lily pads like a throne. This is effective because 'kings' is a strong word to describe ownership and power which he is comparing to the frogs. An example of this in 'Storm on the Island' is "But there are no trees, no natural shelter" which emphasises that nature is overpowering man in the sense that man is trying to hide from the powers of nature, but they cannot hide in the trees or take cover in natural shelter.

Both of Heaney's poems seem to be set in horrible places. In 'Storm on the Island', Heaney describes the island as having "no natural shelter" and he describes how the island is barren and empty. This means he is trying to emphasise that being on an island in the middle of the storm is one of the worst places to be. And similarly in 'Death of a Naturalist' Heaney describes in the second stanza how the frogs are "cocked on sods", sods are loose pieces of boggy mud, which again is a very unpleasant surrounding to be in. **Heaney is trying to turn us against nature with the revolting and negative settings mentioned in the poems. This again displays Heaney's disgust and negative attitude towards nature.**