

GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGE, RAVULAPALEM

A.RAJESWARI, LECTURER IN ENGLISH



Pre Reading Activity

- 1. Who are our first teachers?
- 2. What have you learnt from them?
- 3. How did they influence you?
- 4. What is your goal?
- 5. Did you choose goals that were different from your parents? Why?



About Seamus Heaney

Seamus Justin Heaney was an Irish Poet, playwright, translator and lecturer.

born on April 13, 1939, on a farm in the Castledawson, Northern Ireland.

recipient of many awards

- Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize(1985)
- E.M.Forster Award (1975)
- PEN Translation Prize(1985)
- Nobel Prize in Literature(1995)
- Golden Wreath of Poetry (2001)
- T.S.Eliot Prize (2006)
- Two Whitebread Prizes (1996 & 1999)
- Griffin Poetry Prize
- His works deal mostly with Ireland and with his own family history.



About the Poem

- Digging is one of Seamus Heaney's best known poems .
- It appeared first in the New Statesman magazine in 1964.
- Two years later(in 1966) it was the first poem in Heaney's first published book Death of a Naturalist.
- Digging is an 8 stanza, 31 line poem that starts off in the present, moves into the past and then returns to the present and hints at the future towards the end.



Vocabulary

■ squat : short

■ snug : warm and comfortable ■ rasping : unpleasant sound
■ gravelly ground : a ground which contains a lot of small stones

■ rump : the backside

■ Stooping in rhythm : bending down in a kind of patterned movement

■ nestled : to settle comfortably ■ lug : part of the tool being used for digging

Vocabulary

■ levered : anchored (held) tightly ■

sloppily : not neatly

☀ fell to : to start doing something
immediately

☀ nick : to cut

☀ heaving : to lift up a heavy object over
your shoulder

☀ squelch : to make a wet, sucking sound
with the feet while walking

soggy : soaked with moisture

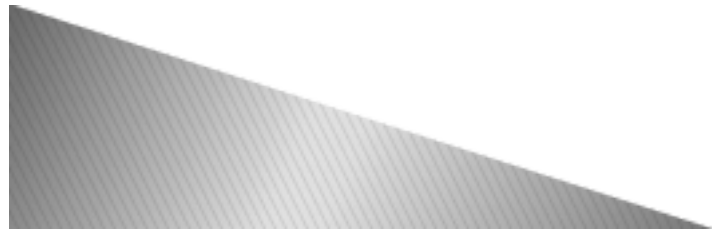
☀ peat : a brown soil that contains
organic matter such as
decomposing vegetables

☀ curt : rude

IRISH BOG (WETLAND)



A bog is a patch of wet, muddy ground, covered in peat, or turf, which forms the grassy top layer. The peat makes for a great fuel and fertilizer, so Irishmen used to (and some still do) harvest the peat by cutting it from the bog and saving it for later use.



Analysis of the poem





- ☀ The tone of a poem is the attitude you feel in it — the writer's attitude toward the subject or audience.
- ☀ regretful tone - because Heaney is not outside digging
- ☀ proud tone – as Heaney is displaying the skills of his father and grandfather for everyone to appreciate
- ☀ in a loving tone- as if the poem is a gift to his father and grandfather





- ☼ In English we sense a rhythm through a varying pattern in the beat of the stresses, or accents in the stream of speech sounds.
- ☼ A foot is the combination of a strong stress and the associated weak stress or stresses which make up the recurrent metric unit of a line.
- ☼ Iambic: an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable
- ☼ Anapestic: two unstressed syllables followed by a stress syllable
- ☼ Trochaic : a stressed followed by an unstressed syllable
- ☼ Dactylic: a stressed followed by two unstressed syllables
- ☼ Spondaic: two successive syllables with approximately equal strong stresses



- ⚙ No regular metre in this poem
- ⚙ Tetrameter – four beats per line
- ⚙ Pentameter – five beats per line
- ⚙ Opening Lines – iambic Tetrameter
- ⚙ Between / my fin / ger and / my thumb
- ⚙ The squat / pen rests; / snug as / a gun.
- ⚙ Pentameters follow in lines 3 and 4:
 - ⚙ Under / my win / dow, a / clean rasp / ing sound
 - ⚙ When the / spade sinks / into / gravel / ly ground.
- Both lines have five feet and a mix of iambic, trochaic and spondaic
- ⚙ iambic: an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable

☀ Trochaic: a stressed followed by an unstressed syllable



☀ Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

☀ Here, the pen is the spade, the speaker declaring that he will use the pen to dig with, leaving behind the tool of his forefathers, the farmer's spade.

☀ Alliteration refers to the use of words near each other that all begin with the same letter or sound.

☀ spade sinks; gravelly ground; tall tops; buried the bright; squelch and slap of soggy; curt cuts



☀ Onomatopiea

☀ Words that sound like what they mean - for example: squelch/slap/soggy.

☀ Repetition

☀ Repeating certain words and phrases in a poem gives the reader a clear message of importance and emphasis. It can also be an echo of the action taking place, in this case that of digging, which is most definitely repetitive.

☀ So look out for the
words: digging...spade....down...men...turf..
..and the first line and a half...Between my
finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests.



- ☀ no set rhyme scheme
 - ☀ no established pattern of end rhymes. ☀
- The only full rhymes occur in lines 3 and 4, sound/ground, they are not a part of a scheme.



☀ The ideas in this poem concern our relationship to our forebears, and to work. Heaney describes his relationship to his father and grandfather purely in terms of their work on the land. He takes the idea of digging, the

commonest form of work in any rural community, and uses it as a symbol for productive, creative work in general - and for writing in particular.

☀ By using this metaphor of digging, Heaney also suggests that he himself needs to dig into the past, and dig into the English language to say what he wants to say.



☀ 1. What does the young poet take to his grandfather? What does it tell you about

him and the grandfather?

☀ 2. What attitude or feelings does the speaker have towards the people working in the fields?

☀ 3. Write a note on how the three men hold their respective tools.

