

Storm on the Island by Seamus Heaney



Background and Context

- Heaney was from Northern Ireland.
- He won the Nobel Prize for Literature on 1995 and died in 2013.
- The poem was published in 1966 at the start of 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland. This was a period of deep unrest and violence between those who wanted to remain part of the UK and those who wanted to become part of Ireland.
- The Northern Ireland Assembly is in Stormont, Belfast. The title of the poem may be a play on words: 'Stormont Ireland'.
- Heaney often wrote about nature and its power.

Synopsis of the poem

- A community prepares for the arrival of a storm, thinking it is well-protected. As the storm gathers strength and force, fear of what might happen grows.

Form and Structure

- Written in blank verse (5 beats in a line, no rhymes). This creates a natural, conversational rhythm to the poem.
- Lack of rhyme could suggest the unpredictability of nature.
- Poem begins: 'We are prepared' and finishes with 'we fear'. This shows how the community loses confidence as the poem progresses.
- There is a volta (change) in line 14: the monosyllabic 'But no' together with the caesura should a change as the storm takes hold.

Vocabulary

- Wizen – dried up
- Stooks – bundles of a crop stacked together to dry out
- Tragic chorus – in Greek theatre, the chorus sang a commentary on the events of the play
- Pummels – repeatedly hits
- Strafes – attacks repeatedly with gunfire or bombs, often from the air
- Salvo – many guns firing at once

Quotations

'We are prepared': shows how the community has confidence that it is ready for the storm. Irony as the rest of poem shows how it is not.

'The flung spray hits the very windows, spits like a tame cat turned savage': simile shows that even if we think we can control nature (tame it), it can still become wild and attack. The force of nature should not be underestimated.

'we are bombarded by the empty air': shows the force of the wind and, therefore, nature. Could also be a metaphor showing that the community is attacked because of words spoken by those in power

'Nor are there trees which might prove company': highlights the lonely, isolated and barren nature of the island.

Poetic Techniques

- Semantic field of warfare used – pummels, exploding, strafes, salvo, bombarded. Shows how the community feels under attack. Suggests the power of nature and how it can be violent and destructive.
- Oxymoron – 'exploding comfortably'. In what way can something explode comfortably? Could suggest it causes no harm or hurt to that which has exploded (the sea) unlike a bomb, which would be ripped apart.
- Conversational tone created by use of the pronouns 'we' and 'you' and extensive use of enjambment.
- The storm could be a metaphor for The Troubles.
- Use of 'we' suggests that the narrator speaks on behalf of others in the community, not just for himself.

Links

The Prelude
London
Exposure

Tone

Foreboding/ominous, dark, anecdotal

Poetry

INTRODUCTION – explain most important similarity & two differences with a connection to question

Both 'POEM A' and 'POEM B' present	the theme of memories	as	having traumatic effects	In order to	show convey evoke suggest imply conjure	that the consequences of war last far longer than the battlefield.
	individual experiences		full of loss			how people desperately hold onto memories.
	the reality of battle		violent			that a glorified view of war is mistaken.
	the power of nature		a hostile force			that nature is more powerful than humans.

However, whilst 'POEM A'	the soldiers are open to nature and are quietly and slowly killed,	in 'POEM B'	the people dig in to stand against the forces of nature.
	absolute political power is presented as transitory		powerful people are presented as being completely ruthless.
	the poet protests against the social injustice he sees in London		the poet writes about the political oppression a refugee faces in a new country.
	the narrator grieves for the loss of her son		the narrator is haunted by memories he can't shake.

WHAT – introduce the idea in your paragraph with a connection to the question

1. WHAT (topic sentence) that links both poems together.

In both poems _____ and _____	the poets show	the theme of memories	by	showing positive memories of childhood
	the poets present	individual experiences		showing how violent war is
	the poets explore	the reality of battle	through	the speaker's tyrannical leadership
		the power of humans		showing nature as intimidating
		the power of nature		

Name one of your poems to analyse in this paragraph:

2: Introduce your poem to analyse

In	Name the Poem	the poet shows the poet presents the poet explores	memories the violence of war nature as intimidating	by through	showing the speaker's positive experiences of childhood.
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HOW – introduce your quotation (where you put your quote into your paragraph)

3: Introducing quotations

For instance, For example, This is clear This can be seen This is shown This is evidenced	when	the poet the speaker	states says refers to comments uses	'.....'
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HOW – explain how your quote proves your WHAT idea

4. Explain your quote

This	shows conveys evokes suggests implies conjures	the power of nature can be frightening and make humans feel insignificant. the persona is traumatised by their experience of battle. that striving for power is ultimately pointless.
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Zoom-in – specific words or phrases using subject terminology (language analysis)

5a. Commenting on a whole phrase or quotation

The use of this...	metaphor simile personification imagery Caesura Enjambment	reinforces highlights conveys suggests implies demonstrates	the Duke's abuse of power the power of the natural world the fear the speaker feels
The poet's use of this			

5b. Commenting on a specific word choice

The verb '.....'	shows	the aggression and violence of war	highlighting demonstrating emphasising	how soldiers are emotionally affected by war.
The adjective '.....'	conveys			
The adverb '.....'	evokes	the emotional turmoil the speaker feels		how the government do not do enough to support ex-soldiers.
The noun '.....'	suggests implies conjures	the negative consequences of war		how the consequences of war can be long-lasting.

WHY – comment on the poets' purpose and wider messages

6a: Showing what the poet was trying to achieve

Perhaps, Possibly, Potentially,	the poet was suggesting the poet was promoting to the idea the poet was criticizing the poet was emphasising	his/her disgust at the way society and the government treat those who have fought. anti-war ideas and beliefs. the horrors that those involved in conflict have to suffer/witness. the way those in power exploit others.
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6b. Suggesting the impact on the reader/ how the poet wanted the readers to react

The poet wanted the readers to	feel realise be aware of change understand	sympathy for those in conflict who are forced to leave their homes. how those in power abuse their status. the treatment of soldiers when they return from duty.
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6c: Identifying shared ideas across two poems

In both poems, the poets	examine explore	the impact of war and the wider consequences of conflict. the brutality and senselessness of the suffering of soldiers.
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Making a comparative link – use a comparative word

7a: Comparing similarities or differences in ideas between poems

In the same way, Similarly, On the other hand, Conversely,	(name of poet)	uses shows suggests	that nature is intimidating. feelings of anger.
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Then repeat steps 3-6 for your second poem.