

ONE SHEET REVISION

'Death of a Naturalist' by Seamus Heaney

Summarise what the poem is about in full sentences:

Annotate the poem with points you can remember from your initial study:

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
5 Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragon-flies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
10 In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jampotfuls 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-
15 Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
20 For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass and angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
25 To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
30 Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

Complete the following questions on context:

- 1) Why is it important to know Heaney includes loss frequently in his poems?
- 2) Why is it important to know he regularly reflects on his upbringing?
- 3) How is this shown in the poem?

Complete each analytical verb with a different idea:

Heaney may have written the poem:

to criticise

to teach

to warn

to reveal the importance of

to celebrate

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Annotate the following quotations by answering the questions for each:



- 1) What does the line mean?
- 2) What does the line suggest?
- 3) How has Heaney used language to present his loss?

'spawn would clutch it'

'Then one hot day'

'fattening dots'

'mammy frog'

How does Heaney present his childhood in the poem?

Answer in full sentences.