‘Patrolling Barnegat’ and ‘Storm on the Island’

Notes / suggested activities

It would be a good idea to teach these side by side, as the subject matter is so similar, and they would be good to compare/contrast in the exam.

Initial readings could be undertaken through drama/S&L activities – in order to bring out the importance of sound and action.

Possible activities could be:

1. ‘Soundscapes’ – students provide a ‘soundtrack’ for the poem as it is read out – perhaps groups of three/four, one/two to read and one/two to provide different sound effects as reading takes place where poem dictates.

2. Students underline/highlight all verbs and prepare a group reading in which they all say the verbs together, trying to bring out the meaning of the words by the way in which they are said. Reading the verbs in ‘rounds’ could be effective.

3. For the next activity (next page), students should have a sheet of sugar paper with each poem stuck on either side. They should read each statement carefully then stick it onto the sugar paper alongside the poem they think it refers to. Wherever possible they should underline a relevant quote and draw a line/arrow linking the statement to a specific quote. Images could be illustrated on the sugar paper and some good display work produced.

Alternatively, students could stick statements into charts in their books, selecting and writing quotations underneath. This would be better for future revision purposes.

(Heaney statements=1,3,4,9,13,14,16,17,20. Whitman statements=2,5,6,7,11,15. BOTH=8,10,12,19)

Ideal follow up work could focus on descriptive writing – write an estate agent’s ‘sales pitch’ (writing to persuade) alongside an entry for a local guide book (writing to inform) on Heaney’s island, drawing attention to differences. Rewrite ‘Patrolling’ in prose, or describe the experience of patrolling Barnegat on a beautiful summer’s day.
Each of these statements is about either ‘Storm on the island’, ‘Patrolling Barnegat’, or BOTH. Decide which statement is about which poem/s.

**1.** The speakers of the poem live on an island and are used to very bad weather.

**2.** This poem is one long sentence, which helps to show the power, force and speed of the storm. Because of the way it is punctuated, you are forced to read the poem more quickly, with no long pauses. This helps you to feel the uncontrollable* nature of the storm. Reading the poem out loud properly can even make you breathless.

**3.** The environment is barren (nothing grows) – there are no trees and no hay grows.

**4.** The poet has written this poem in different lengths of sentences. The shorter sentences give the poem a thoughtful feel as you are forced to slow down. Longer sentences are used when describing the storm to help to get across its power, speed and uncontrollability*.

**5.** The poet makes the gale sound terrifying by comparing it to a people’s voices ‘muttering’ and ‘laughing’ demons.

**6.** The poem describes a scene in which people are keeping look-out along the shore on a stormy night.

**7.** The meaning of the poem is not easy to follow - this can confuse and disorientate* the reader. This is very effective because this is like the storm itself– in the extreme noise and murky darkness you would probably feel lost frightened and confused.

**8.** The poet is showing how powerful nature is compared to man

**9.** You feel as if the writer is speaking directly to you (it is written in a ‘conversational’ style). This makes you feel personally involved, and so makes the poem more powerful and direct.

**10.** The poet uses powerful, detailed descriptions to show us the power of nature, and how weak people are in comparison.
11. Every line ends with a verb (action word). This helps to make the storm sound as if it is building up and getting out of control as there is so much going on.

12. Present tense is used which makes the storm sound like it is happening right now. This gives the poem more impact – it has a stronger effect on the reader.

13. When the wind blows, it sounds like a group of people singing or talking together in a sad, distressed way. This is called personification – talking about a non-living thing as if it is alive/a person.

14. The poet tries to show how the island is a very lonely and isolated place.

15. Nature is shown to have an almost god-like power, as the poet describes ‘Waves, air [and] midnight’ as a ‘savage trinity’. (‘The trinity’ is a religious term which refers to ‘The father, The son, and The Holy Ghost’)

16. The storm is made to sound more distressing because the wind cannot be seen blowing things around, and it does not make a great deal of noise – it is the fear of the unknown.

17. The poet uses words about war/bombing to make the storm sound dangerous, threatening and destructive (‘hits’, ‘dives’, ‘strafes’, ‘salvo’ and ‘bombarded’).

18. Even the men on watch sound mysterious and strange, as they are described as ‘A group of dim, weird forms’.

19. Some of the words used help us to hear the sounds of the storm and the sea – the poet uses onomatopoeia (sound words) to good effect.

20. A simile comparing the sea spray to a cat is used to show how the sea spray hits the windows. This helps to make the sea sound spiteful and wild – out of control.

*disorientate = feel lost, confused, uncertain
* uncontrollability = something that cannot be controlled
A sonnet is a poem which follows very strict rules. It was very popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, and tended to be used to praise women by ‘love-sick’ males. The following sonnet was written at a time, however, when writers became interested in the power and beauty of nature.

Below is a copy of John Clare’s poem ‘Sonnet’. However, it is written as a paragraph rather than set out as a sonnet should be. Your task is to put in a single slash (/) where you think a line should end in order to turn the poem back into a sonnet. Use a pencil so that you can change your mind!

The rules of a sonnet are:
- They have a very strict rhyme scheme (here, rhyming couplets – that is, pairs of lines that rhyme)
- They have fourteen lines
- They are written in iambic pentameter (lines with ten syllables/beats, with five strong beats/stressed beats)

I love to see the summer beaming forth and white wool sack clouds sailing to the north I love to see the wild flowers come again and Mare blobs stain with gold the meadow drain and water lilies whiten on the floods where reed clumps rustle like a wind shook wood where from her hiding place the moor hen pushes and seeks her flag nest floating in bull rushes I like the willow leaning half way o’er the clear deep lake to stand upon its shore I love the hay grass when the flower head swings to summer winds and insects happy wings that sport about the meadow the bright day and see bright beetles in the clear lake play

1. What season is being praised in this poem? What country do you think Clare is describing?
2. Make a list of all the things that Clare loves or likes about this season.
3. Pick out two phrases which make summer sound beautiful/positive.
4. Write down one simile from the poem and explain its effects – what it makes you think/feel/imagine.
5. Write down one metaphor from the poem and explain its effects – what it makes you think/feel/imagine.
6. Compared to other poems we have looked at so far, how easy/difficult would you say the language in this poem is - on a scale of 1-10?
7. Why do you think Clare has described the summer in such a simple, straightforward way?
8. Look very closely at the poem. Do you notice anything unusual about the punctuation? Can you think of a reason why Clare might have done this?
9. Look at the poems we have studied so far. Make a list of any poems which seem to you to have something in common with ‘Sonnet’. Think about what the poems are about and the way they are written.
‘Sonnet 130’ * Shakespeare and ‘At a Potato Digging’ * Heaney

Notes / suggested activities

‘Sonnet 130’: Pre-reading activities: Write a love letter to someone (imaginary if you like) PERSUADING them that you love them, and they MUST go out with you. Pairs swap and underline effective bits. Invite class to read out some. Hopefully you can draw out conventions of love letters/poems from this, as well as teach persuasive techniques (for language paper one).

An alternative would be to write the letter as a game of ‘consequences’ (students write one sentence) then pass on.

‘At a Potato Digging’ (Heaney): This difficult poem may benefit from initially transforming it into a series of freeze frames – perhaps followed by groups creating short improvised scenes based on each section.

Handouts with possible quotes are on the page 18.

Students can either do the following written activities (p19 – 20) alone, in pairs, or in groups. Perhaps share out the different sections of questions between class, and feedback at end (there are quite a few!). Groups or pairs could give a presentation on a given section using the questions as prompts, and annotating an OHT so that class can follow their ideas.

On pages 21-22 of this SOW are two grids to help students compare all the Lit poems. They are rather too unwieldy to do in one go, so it would be a good idea to introduce them after this poem (about halfway through), and return to it every 2-3 poems.

‘At a Potato Digging’ (Heaney): Drama Activities

1. Read the poem together with class sitting in a circle – all students read a sentence each moving clockwise around circle. Next divide class into four sections (without moving them); each group must read a section, reading a line each rather than a sentence.

2. Invite from class any short initial responses to the poem – hopefully some of the ideas below will surface.

3. In Pairs: Create short improvised scenes using the following words as prompts: EXHAUSTION; WORSHIP; CONFLICT; HUNGER; STARVATION; DISEASE; DEATH.

4. Give students a copy of the following sheet (p18), or let them select three quotes per section for themselves to illustrate (the drawback with this is that they tend to avoid what they don’t immediately understand - i.e. the images they need to grapple with). Select groups of about six at random.

5. Groups should choose a narrator to read the phrases with as much expression as possible. Give max. 5-6 mins. for each section, stopping to watch and discuss only one group’s representation of each quote (Look out and note good ones as they work).
1. In what ways is this poem similar to ‘Sonnet’ by John Clare?

2. What is being described in this poem?

3. Draw a picture of the poet’s mistress and label it, using words from the poem.
   Describe:
   a) her eyes
   b) her lips
   c) her breasts
   d) her hair
   e) her cheeks
   f) her breath
   g) her voice

4. Sum up the way the narrator describes his mistress.

5. In what ways is the language in the poem different to traditional ‘love letters’?

6. Even though the speaker’s mistress does not sound particularly attractive, how does he feel about her? Which lines tell you this?

7. What do you think the poet is saying about traditional love poems?

8. Shakespeare is writing a ‘parody’ of a traditional love sonnet/poem. Now either:
   a) Rewrite ‘Sonnet 130’ as a traditional love poem/sonnet
      OR
   b) Write your own parody of a love poem.

9. Now make two lists which compare and contrast John Clare’s ‘Sonnet’ and Shakespeare’s ‘Sonnet 130’.
Section I

‘Labourers swarm behind, stoop to fill/ wicker creels.’

‘Some pairs keep breaking ragged ranks to fetch/ a full creel to the pit…’

‘Centuries /Of fear and homage to the famine god/Toughen the muscles behind their humbled knees,/Make a seasonal alter of the sod.’

Section II

‘…potatoes…whose solid feel, whose wet inside/ promises taste of ground and root.’

Section III

‘Live skulls, blind-eyed, balanced on /Wild higgledy skeletons scoured the land in ‘45’

‘beaks of famine snipped at guts.’

‘A people hungering from birth,/ grubbing like plants, in the bitch earth…’

Section IV

‘Dead-beat, they flop/Down in the ditch and take their fill,/Thankfully breaking timeless fasts’

‘Then, stretched on the faithless ground, spill/ Libations of tea, scatter crumbs.’
1. Read the whole poem again carefully. There are four sections to the poem. Read the following statements and decide which one is about each section.

- The terrible effects of the Irish potato famine of 1845 are described metaphorically and in vivid detail. Heaney paints a horrific picture of the people, and the land. We see that even today, memories of the potato famine are strong. Unlike the other three sections, this one is written in the past tense.

- The potatoes are described in detail, also metaphorically; they are described in both harsh and positive ways. Heaney appeals to all the reader’s senses here.

- We see the workers stop, exhausted, and have their lunch. Their leftovers are thrown to the ground as if the people are worshipping the ground, even though it has betrayed them over the years, and they feel contempt and bitterness towards it.

- Heaney describes the machinery and workers in a field as they dig potatoes. The act of digging potatoes from the earth is made to sound religious – as if the people are worshipping the soil itself, or the ‘god of famine’.

Write each description down in your books in the right order, numbered I-IV. (Check with your teacher first!)

**Section I**

1. What do you imagine when you read that ‘labourers swarm behind’ the digger? What do the workers sound like here?
2. In this stanza (verse), the workers are made to sound like a poorly dressed and badly organized army. Pick out two words or phrases which help to do this.
3. What do some pairs stop to take to the ‘pit’? (What do you think a ‘creel’ might be?)
4. What are compared to ‘fish’ and the ‘crumpled surf’ in line 10?
5. Write down all the words in section one which have something to do with religion.
6. What has made the muscles behind the workers’ knees ‘Toughen’ up?
7. What is the ‘sod’ compared to in line 16? (Find out what this is in a dictionary if you do not know.)
8. Find any examples of alliteration. What is the effect?

**Section II**

1. What are the potatoes compared to in line 18?
2. What are they compared to in line 29? Now complete the following: ‘This image makes me imagine/feel…’
3. Heaney’s description of the potatoes is very striking; this is partly because he appeals to the readers’ senses. Make lists of quotes which appeal to the reader’s senses under the following headings:
- sight
- touch
- hearing
- taste

4. Find some examples of onomatopoeia and alliteration. What are the effects?

**Section III**
1. What ‘scoured the land’ in 1845?
2. How did they die? (stanza I)
3. What happened to the potatoes in the ‘long clay pit?’ (stanza 2).
4. What are both the people and the famine compared to in stanza three? Talk about the effects of one of these comparisons (metaphors).
5. What do you learn about the living conditions of the people in stanza three?
6. Look at stanza four; what is the poet’s (and possibly the people’s attitude towards the earth? How do you know this?
7. Which phrase shows that the people never really forget about the potato famine of the past?
8. The cruelty and suffering is made to seem more real with Heaney’s use of bitter, sharp-sounding words and phrases in this section; find three examples of this.

**Section IV**
1. How would you describe the tone (mood) in this, the final section? Which words/phrases help to create this mood?
2. What are the gulls compared to in stanza one? (Use a dictionary). What other images does this link with in stanza three?
3. What are the words/phrases to do with religion right at the end of the poem? What seem to be the peoples’ attitudes/feelings towards the ‘faithless ground’?
4. Are there any examples of alliteration? What is the effect?

**General questions**
1. The people seem to have two very different (contradictory) feelings about the soil/earth. What are they?
2. Why do you think that Heaney has chosen to number each section of his poem? What is the effect of using Roman Numerals, rather than modern numbers? (You MUST comment on STRUCTURE of poems in EXAM!)
3. Which other poem/poet we’ve studied has been about Ireland, and the problems the Irish have had? What are the similarities in the way language is used?
4. Which did you prefer and why?
You are marked in the exam on your ability to **COMPARE** poems. **You will HAVE TO compare ONE HEANEY, ONE CLARKE and TWO of the PRE-1914 ("Bank") POEMS.** Use this grid to think about the ways that the poems are similar or different. This grid will help you to look at the LANGUAGE and STRUCTURE of the poems.

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<th>Conversational, direct language</th>
<th>Vivid Description</th>
<th>Onomatopoeia</th>
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Select a quote that illustrates each of the following points (one quote per bullet point).

1. The narrator remembers vividly a particular time of year in his childhood:
   •

2. The narrator speaks directly to us, putting us in the place of a person sharing these memories. This makes us feel very involved:
   •

3. The memories are brought to life by Heaney’s appeal to the reader’s sense of touch:
   •
   •

4. The descriptions are brought to life by Heaney’s appeal to the reader’s sense of taste:
   •
   •

5. The memory of childhood summers is warm, positive and full of hope and energy:
   •

6. The excitement and energy of childhood comes across in words and phrases which sound active and busy:
   •
7. Childhood is made to sound carefree – The narrator remembers being dirty and injured, but he didn’t care:

•

8. The blackberries are described using similes and metaphors which make them sound rich, ripe and full of life – at their physical best:

•

•

9. Several phrases have a very strong impact because words are linked together with similar sounds – Heaney uses alliteration.

•

•

10. There is a sharp contrast between the first and second stanza as Heaney now remembers the disappointment of finding that berries he’d saved had all rotted – the tastes, textures and smells are now described using negative, disgusting – sounding words/phrases:

•

•

11. As a child, the narrator hopes for the berries to stay the same, but knows in his heart that things cannot. This could be a general comment about growing up:

•
Exploring a poem

Use this guide to help you talk/make notes about a poem. The notes are organized under ‘assessment objectives’ (the things your exam answers will be marked on).

Interpretation

- The poem is about…
- The poet seems to be saying…

Language

- Look at the way words and phrases are used
- Are there any images (similes/metaphors)?
- Are certain words particularly powerful?
- Is sound important – any use of onomatopoeia or alliteration?

Structure

- Look at the way the poem is laid out on the page – what can you say about it?
- Are sentences particularly long/short? Why, do you think?

Links with other poems

- Is this like any other poems in any way? (ideas/themes/language/feelings)?

Personal Response

- What do you like/dislike about the poem – or parts of it and why?
- What are your reactions to the ideas and attitudes of the poet?

Use phrases like this to talk about effects:

- ‘This word/phrase suggests…’
- ‘This makes me feel…’
- ‘This image is powerful/ effective because…’
- ‘The effect of this on the reader is…’
- ‘The poet has done this to…’
In the **Literature exam**, you will have to write an essay comparing four poems in about one hour, and it will be **worth 40% of your ENTIRE GRADE**. Use this grid to help you plan an essay of **AT LEAST FOUR PARAGRAPHS** – one covering each **assessment objective**.

**Title:** In ‘**Blackberry Picking**’, Heaney writes about a particular season vividly. Compare the way Heaney does this with one poem from Clarke, and two poems from **The Pre – 1914 Bank**.

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<th>Assessment Objectives</th>
<th>INTERPRETATION—meanings and ideas</th>
<th>LANGUAGE – ways language is used and effects</th>
<th>STRUCTURE – ways words, sentences, lines &amp; verses are put together</th>
<th>PERSONAL RESPONSE – your own feelings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blackberry Picking</td>
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