|  |
| --- |
| Heaney – Approaching the Essay |

List of poems we have covered (remember that you can access the notes on these on my website at any time):

1. Bogland

2. A Constable Calls

3. The Skunk

4. The Harvest Bow

5. The Underground

6. A Call

**Organised by theme:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Memory**  Bogland  The Skunk  The Harvest Bow  **The Marvellous**  Bogland  The Skunk  The Harvest Bow  **Sense of place**  Bogland  The Skunk  The Harvest Bow  The Underground  **Childhood / Family / Family love**  A Constable Calls  The Harvest Bow | **Nature**  Bogland  The Skunk  A Call  **Violence / Conflict / Politics**  A Constable Calls  The Harvest Bow (possibly)  **Poetry / Craft**  Bogland  The Skunk  The Harvest Bow  A Call  **Romantic Love / Marriage**  The Underground  The Skunk |

**Sample Questions from educate.ie papers**

**1.**

“While Heaney’s poetry depicts ordinary people in ordinary places, his language and style are dramatic.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with suitable reference to the poetry of Seamus Heaney on your course.

**2.**

**“**Heaney’s poetry appeals to the senses in terms of its themes, language and imagery.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with suitable reference to the poetry of Seamus Heaney on your course.

**3.**

“All that is natural and truthful, both good and bad, is revealed in Heaney’s poetry.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with suitable reference to the poetry of Seamus Heaney on your course.

PLANNING YOUR ANSWER

**“While Heaney’s poetry depicts ordinary people in ordinary places, his language and style are dramatic.”**

**To what extent do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with suitable reference to the poetry of Seamus Heaney on your course.**

Step one: Examine the title closely. The key words are ‘ordinary people’ and ‘ordinary places’, and dramatic language.

Step two: What poems have you studied that deal with ordinary people in ordinary places? How are they dramatic in terms of language / style?

* *A Constable Calls*: Farmer / father giving details of crops to government-appointed official – language/style is dramatic in that it hints at oppression, tension and conflict
* *The Underground*: Newly-married couple running to concert – language/style is dramatic in that it transforms this into mythological story – sexual tension and tension of marriage it evolves over the years
* *The Skunk*: Man working abroad, missing his wife; older version of man still attracted to his wife – dramatic language/style makes the ordinary extraordinary – clever/amusing link to desire for wife and exoticism of ordinary events.
* *The Harvest Bow*: Farmer making little straw decoration; son remembers evenings together – dramatic language / style links past and present and shows power of simple objects to evoke extraordinarily strong feelings.

Step three: In what order would you arrange these poems? Think about the theme and the dramatic language. Is there any sort of gradation? I would look at the fact that two of these poems deal with Heaney’s father and upbringing, and two deal with his marriage. Then I might think of organising them in some sort of vaguely chronological order.

1. A Constable Calls – Young Heaney

2. The Harvest Bow – Slightly older Heaney

3. The Underground – Newly-married Heaney

4. The Skunk – More settled Heaney

Obviously, this is only a suggestion and you are free to use other poems and organise them in any way you like. I find it helpful to do it this way as it is easier to create links between poems and to create a naturally- flowing essay.