

Storm on the Island – Seamus Heaney (anthology pg 35)

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees
Which might prove company when it blows full
Blast: you know what I mean - leaves and branches
Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale
So that you listen to the thing you fear
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.
You might think that the sea is company,
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits
The very windows, spits like a tame cat
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo,
We are bombarded with the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

Wizened – shrivelled or dried up

Stooks – bundles of a crop stacked together and left in a field to dry

Strafe - attack repeatedly with bombs or machine-gun fire from low-flying aircraft.

Salvo – lots of guns firing at once.

Features of the Island

The poem describes an islander's thoughts on living in an exposed place. Read the poem again, and, make a list of the features of the island that we are either told about directly or we can infer.

Feature of the Island	Evidence from the Poem

'Storm on the Island' - Language and Imagery Techniques

Can you find examples of these techniques within the poem? Explain the meaning/intended effect of each of these techniques.

Technique	Quotation	Meaning/Intended Effect
simile		
personification		
onomatopoeia		
alliteration		
emotive words (verb/noun/adjective/adverb)		
metaphor		

1. What is the poem about? What happens in it?
2. This poem is written in blank verse (no rhyme scheme or pattern). How does that help to make it sound more like everyday speech? Why do you think the poet does this?
3. Why do you think the poem addresses the reader directly (“you listen...”)? What impact does this have?
4. Highlight any words or images which make the island sound empty. What impression do we get of the island from the things you have highlighted?
5. Highlight in another colour, words and phrases used to describe the actual storm. What are the connotations (suggested meaning) of some of these words? (ANNOTATE YOUR POEM). What impression do we get of the storm?
6. Find an example of personification in the poem. What are the connotations of the words used? What impression does this personification give us of the object that is given human characteristics?
7. What is the effect of comparing the sea to a “tame cat turned savage”? What are connotations of the words used? What impression do we get of the impact the storm has on other aspects of nature?
8. What is the effect of the military language used to describe the air at the end of the poem? What impression do we get of nature, in comparison to the people who live on the island?
9. Do you think the speaker likes living on the island? Why/why not?
10. What impression do you get of the people who live on this island? Does it change throughout the poem, or does it stay the same?
11. Which other poems, from those you have studied so far, could you link to this poem? Why? What are the key themes that link this poem to others? What are the similarities and differences between them?
12. Complete the planning diagram, considering the question: **“Compare how poets present the power of nature in ‘Storm on the Island’ and one other poem from the Power and Conflict cluster.”**

Storm on the Island

Presentation of the power of nature:

1.

2.

Poetic devices used and quotations:

1.

2.

Detailed analysis of power of nature using quote/s:

Tone and structure:

Presentation of the power of nature:

1.

2.

Poetic devices used and quotations:

1.

2.

Detailed analysis of power of nature using quote/s:

Tone and structure:

Similarities