

Death of a Naturalist

A lot of our understanding of this poem relies on the sound of the words in the text; the activities below are designed to help you explore these attributes of 'Death of a Naturalist'.

The use of alliteration

Firstly write down your understanding of the meaning of 'alliteration'. Find a dictionary or literary terms dictionary if you are unsure.

Now use a different colour for each numbered point below. Highlight all the words that begin with:

1. A 'h' sound.
2. A 'f' sound.
3. A 'w' sound.
4. A 's' sound.

Can you spot any other initial (first) letter sounds that are repeated in the poem? Highlight any you find with a different colour pen.

The above are all examples of 'alliteration'.

It is never any good to just be able to identify these in your work, you need to explain the significance (or importance) of the literary device (here 'alliteration'). Discuss with a partner, and write down, why you think Heaney has chosen to use so much alliteration in his poem and what effect it has. Does it, for example, make the frogs sound glamorous, elegant, ugly, clumsy?

The use of assonance

Firstly write down your understanding of the meaning of 'assonance'. Find a dictionary or literary terms dictionary if you are unsure.

Now use a different colour for each numbered point below. Highlight all the words that have the following vowel sounds within the words (that is they are not the first, or initial, letter sound):

1. Short 'a' sound.
2. Long 'a' sound.
3. 'e' sound.
4. 'o' sound.
5. 'i' sound.
6. 'u' sound.

Can you find any other vowel sounds within any words? Highlight these with a different colour pen.

The above are all examples of 'assonance'. Which examples of assonance are most frequent in the poem? Discuss with a partner what effect you think each example has and why Heaney has repeated one or two sounds more often than others.