

The Barn

1. Before reading the poem, write down a list of words and phrases that you think describe a barn.
2. Now read the poem and write a few sentences to describe your reaction to it. In other words, write down your opinion of the poem and whether it is what you expected or not.
3. Without looking back at the poem, sort the following similes, which have all been muddled up:

Threshed corn lay piled	as cement in two lugged sacks
Or solid	like the great blind rats
All summer when the zinc burned	like grit of ivory
The dark gulped	like an oven
The two-lugged sacks moved in	like a roof-space

4. Why do you think Heaney has used so many similes?
5. Make a list of all the animals and animal imagery in the poem.
6. What sort of impression do we get of the barn from these?
7. Can you find any repetition in the poem? Why do you think Heaney chose to repeat this? What effect does it have?
8. Make a list of all the verbs used in the poem. What impression do you get of the movement from the selected words?
9. Find all the references to the barn itself, such as, 'The floor was mouse-grey', and consider what sort of picture it gives you of the building.
10. What do you notice about the structure of the poem? Is there any regularity to the stanza or line length? What effect does it have?
11. In one stanza, the pronoun 'you' is used and in another 'I'; why do you think Heaney has done this and what is the effect? Why does he change from one to the other?
12. Overall, what impression do you get of the barn from the poem? What do you think of the last stanza and the picture it gives of the barn?