

'-The patterns of poetry are a way of finding, echoing mirrored shapes in patterns in the world around us.'

'-The major task for the poet is to find fresh rhythms. To make fresh music and not to repeat himself or anybody else for that matter, and the only way one is going to find new vital rhythms is being vital and alive and alert and responsive oneself. To live life with all of one's pores open.'

The townland of Carrigskeewaun is very dear to the poet. See if you can geographically locate the area on a map. What other information can you find about the coast of County Mayo? Do some research and, in groups, share your findings. Nominate a place or area that you would describe as being 'dear' to you. Describe the place and explain why it has made such an impression on you.

1. In his interview, Michael Longley talks about how the poem is divided into headed sections and how each section explores distance and closeness. How is this evident in *The Mountain*? Who is doing the 'supervising' in this segment?
2. Describe in your own words what happens in *The Path*. In what way is the swan different from the rest of the birds? How does the poet feel about this?
3. Investigate the word 'remaindered' in *The Strand*. What world of work does it belong to? In a way the poet could be said to be 'reading' the beach. What other word or image from the book trade does 'remaindered' link up with in this section?
4. *The Wall*: what is a 'dry-stone wall'? What is the poet momentarily doing in the poem? As he hunkers there what thoughts or images are conjured up in his mind? How might this relate back to what was said in question one?
5. How can *The Lake* 'duplicate at any time...'? How can the poet?

These sections are like poetic postcards or snap-shots. Have a rummage in your own memory and see if you can find a memory, a moment where you came in contact with the wild or natural world. Then preserve the memory in your own poetic snap-shot.

On a personal, individual level, ask pupils to focus on a member of their own family and think of an appropriate and effective image or series of images that somehow captures how they feel about that person. This might develop into a poem or piece of descriptive writing.

Perch on their water perch hung in the clear Bann River
Near the clay bank in alder dapple and waver,

Perch they called 'grunts', little flood-slubs, runty and ready,
I saw and I see in the river's glorified body

That is passable through, but they're bluntly holding the
pass,
Under the water-roof, over the bottom, adoze

On the current, against it, all muscle and slur
In the finland of perch, the fenland of alder, on air

That is water, on carpets of Bann stream, on hold
In the everything flows and steady go of the world.

'-quite often the kind of poem I write is just an attempt to get back.'

'-these perch, although they are actually in the river, they are very much in a kind of fifty-five year old memory lake of my own.'

'-I think that water is immediately interesting. It's just as an element it is full of life. It is associated with origin, it is bright, it reflects you.'

Discuss what the natural world means to you. Are you aware of it? Or do you pass through it not noticing, taking it for granted? *The Perch* is a short lyrical poem where Heaney takes pleasure from nature. In his interview the poet says, 'certain images are like...little frames from a film you forgot the story of but these single frames stay...' What images of the natural world stay with you?

1. In his interview, Heaney talks about the pleasure of the poem and mentions the puns he allows himself to get away with in the poem. Where are some of these puns? Write a list and try to explain them.
2. What might the presence of so many 'r' sounds in the first few lines of the poem suggest or invoke in a poem about fish in a river?
3. 'I saw and I see...'
4. Why the two tenses? What might this say about writing nature poetry?
5. Consider and write a few lines about the religious significance of: 'the river's glorified body/ That is passable through...'
6. What qualities or human characteristics, even, does the poet admire in the perch?

Read Ted Hughes' poem *Pike* and then compare and contrast these two fishy poems. Say what phrases, words or sounds stood out for you in the poem and, if possible, why.