

Starter for Ten

Define the key words

soliloquy	enjambment	caesura
Didactic purpose	sonnet	stanza
Semantic field	Extended metaphor	Iambic pentameter

Storm on the Island

What is the poem about?

The poem describes **the experience of being in a cliff top cottage on an island off the coast of Ireland during a storm**. Heaney describes the ground, the sea and the wind. The people in the cottage are isolated and can do nothing against the powerful and violent weather.



Storm on the Island

Let's read the poem!

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.



Storm on the Island

Meaning/main messages of the poem:

- On the surface, at least, “Storm on the Island” is a poem about **humankind and nature**. Though people may build their protected communities to live in, nature is so powerful that no community is ever completely safe from destruction. The poem, then, shows humankind as being in constant negotiation with its environment.
- In the poem, ‘*Storm on the Island*’ the poet Seamus Heaney has very powerfully evoked the atmosphere and throws challenges to the idealized thinking about living on an island.



Storm on the Island

Complete the cloze activity in your booklet:



Storm on the Island:

Destroyed	preparations
Nature	idyllic
Resourceful	power
Safe	build
Beautiful	community

On the surface, at least, “Storm on the Island” is a poem about humankind and _____. Though people may build their protected communities to live in, nature is so powerful that no community is ever completely _____ from destruction.

Nature in poetry is often portrayed as _____ and _____. “Storm on the Island,” however, presents another side of the natural world. The poem opens with the speaker describing the architecture of this rural, isolated _____. Speaking on the community’s behalf, the speaker outlines how they _____ their dwellings in a way that they hope protects them from the natural elements.

The community also knows that when the storm does come, it will be overwhelming. At that point, the community will truly be tested and maybe even _____. It’s clear that the people on this island, despite all their careful _____, can’t actually be certain of staying safe in the storm.

“Storm on the Island,” then, speaks to humankind’s ability to be _____ and make its home wherever it goes. But this survival, the poem implies, is always something that requires an element of luck, with nature *always* retaining the _____—through storms or similar—to undo people’s hard work.

Storm on the Island:



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On the surface, at least, “Storm on the Island” is a poem about humankind and **nature**. Though people may build their protected communities to live in, nature is so powerful that no community is ever completely **safe** from destruction.

Nature in poetry is often portrayed as **idyllic** and **beautiful**. “Storm on the Island,” however, presents another side of the natural world. The poem opens with the speaker describing the architecture of this rural, isolated **community**. Speaking on the community’s behalf, the speaker outlines how they **build** their dwellings in a way that they hope protects them from the natural elements.

The community also knows that when the storm does come, it will be overwhelming. At that point, the community will truly be tested and maybe even **destroyed**. It’s clear that the people on this island, despite all their careful **preparations**, can’t actually be certain of staying safe in the storm. “Storm on the Island,” then, speaks to humankind’s ability to be **resourceful** and make its home wherever it goes. But this survival, the poem implies, is always something that requires an element of luck, with nature *always* retaining the **power**—through storms or similar—to undo people’s hard work.

Storm on the Island:

Golden quotations:

What is the impact of onomatopoeia?

spits like a tame cat

Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly.

Why have Heaney used a simile to describe the storm? How does this link to the political struggles at the time?

What can you say about the use of 'strafes invisibly'?



Storm on the Island:

Golden quotations:

leaves and branches

Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale

Can you explain why Heaney has used the phrase 'tragic chorus'?
Listen to the analysis and write down your answer.



Storm on the Island:

Structure:

Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.



Storm on the Island: plenary/exit ticket.

Imagine this is your exam question:

'Compare how the power of nature is presented in 'Storm on the Island' and one other poem.

- 1) Decide which poem you would compare with.**
- 2) Write down one point of comparison between the poems.**

