

Digging: Pre-Reading Component

Discussion

We all came from somewhere, a family, a tradition, and a place. These factors create who we are and affect our choices.

Many times teenagers try to rebuff or are ashamed of their roots in their struggle to reach an independent personality.

The aim of this discussion and its following assignment is to make students understand they should be respectful and feel proud of their roots while forming an independent personality.

“Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgement and accounting.” (Pirkei Avot 3;1)

Leading Questions

What is our "common background"?

What is "personal background"?

What does the word "roots" signify? Give examples

What features in your family can be traced to their "roots"?

How significant are "roots"?

How much do they affect our lives?

Should anyone ever deny his\her "roots"?

My Roots

Try to define your “roots”. In what ways do you recognize inside you your "roots" and in what ways are you different? Present your " roots" to your class.

Basic Understanding

Low Frequency vocabulary

Key Vocabulary

squat
snug
rasping sound
spade
gravelly
straining rump
coarse
shaft
levered
turf
corked
heaving (heave)
sod
mould (mold)
peat
squelch
slap
curt
cuts of an edge
drill
nicking

High Frequency Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with the suitable word.

edge rhythms sinks nestled rooted up buried firmly sloppily
straightened-up soggy stooped slice neatly handles

1. The temperature _____ quickly after the sun sets.
2. The cereal got all _____.
3. She enjoyed the _____ of country life.
4. He _____ his head against his mother's shoulder.
5. Stop the bleeding by pressing _____
6. They made a mess, _____ plants and flowers.
7. He _____ the box in the back garden.
8. She usually ties her ponytail _____.
9. He slowly _____, using the table for support.
10. Linda _____ to pick up the bottles.
11. _____ the onion into rings.
12. I folded the shirts and put them _____ in the closet.
13. He made us all nervous by standing so close to the _____ of the cliff.
14. He _____ his motorcycle well.

Questions

1. What connection is there between the poet and the characters in the poem?
2. What is the characters' occupation? Does the poet share the same job?
3. How is their work described in the poem?
4. What smells and sounds comes to life in the poet's head?

Literary Terms: Metaphors and Similes

Simile: Comparing between two unlike or dissimilar things (using "like" or "as"). Line two contains a simile.

For example: The sisters are like two peas in a pod.

Metaphor: Using the characteristics of one thing to describe another. In other words, a metaphor is a way to compare by saying one thing **is** another thing.

For example: Friendship is eternal sunshine. *He was drowning in paperwork*

Write either a metaphor or a simile using the word pairs below:

Owl, smart

Computer, vehicle

Paintbrush, magic wand

Waves, lions

Using metaphor and simile in the poem

1. Throughout the poem, the term "digging" is used metaphorically. What does it imply?
2. How does the simile show the writer's attitude to his "pen"?

Analysis and Interpretation

Questions

1. Throughout the poem, the term "digging" is used metaphorically. What does it imply?
2. Heaney compares his pen to a gun. What does he try to say by this simile? Compare and contrast "pen" and "gun".
3. Compare and contrast the first stanza of the poem with the last, considering specifically the replacement of "snug as a gun" (2) with "I'll dig with it" (31). What kind of attitude toward the speaker's work does each phrase suggest?
4. What is the general attitude of the speaker towards his family and their chosen livelihood?
5. What similarities are there between writing and digging for potatoes or peat?

Bridging Text and Context

Read the information below and answer its following question.



Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) was born in Northern Ireland, the eldest member of a catholic family of nine children. His father owned and worked a small farm. Potato Farming was a major industry in Irish agriculture in those days. Heaney won many prizes for his writing and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995

"There are lots of people I admire and respect, but I don't necessarily want to be like them. I'm too happy being myself."

James D'arcy

How does the new information about Heaney and the quote connect to the poem "Digging"? Include examples from the poem to support the connection which you made.

Post-reading Component

Choose one of the following:

- Create a dialogue between the speaker and his father.
- Draw a cartoon or make a PowerPoint presentation depicting your interpretation of the poem.
- Write an interview with Seamus Heaney and have him explain the main message of his poem.

Question 1: Who are the characters in the poem?

Question 2: What are the characters' occupations?

Question 3: What places does the poet describe in his poem?

Question 4: What smells and sounds come to life in the poet's head?

Question 5: What does the speaker think of his father's and grandfather's work?

Question 6: There are repeated references to the spade and shovel. Why? What do those tools represent?

Question 7: When the lines "Between my finger and my thumb/ The squat pen rests" are repeated at the end, has the meaning changed from when you read them at the beginning? How so?

Question 8: Do you think the speaker is unhappy that he's not a potato farmer like his father and grandfather? Why or why not? Support your answer with proof from the poem. *What thinking skills did you use to answer this question and how did you use it?*

Question 9: Why does Heaney compare the spade to the pen?

What thinking skills did you use to answer this question and how did you use it?

Question 10:

"Change your opinions, keep to your principles; change your leaves, keep intact your roots." Victor Hugo

How does the quote connect to the poem? Give at least one example of the connection to the text.

Digging by Seamus Heaney

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
⁵ My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

¹⁰ The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

¹⁵ By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
²⁰ Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

²⁵ The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
³⁰ The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.