

'When all the others were away at Mass'

When all the others were away at Mass
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.
They broke the silence, let fall one by one
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:
Cold comforts set between us, things to share
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes
From each other's work would bring us to our
senses.



So while the parish priest at her bedside
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying
And some were responding and some were crying
I remembered her head bent towards my head,
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives -
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

by Seamus Heaney

1. This poem deals with a number of important themes such as:

love

family

ordinary life

death

Rank these themes from 1-4 in order of importance, where 1 is the most important theme of this poem in your opinion and 4 is the least important theme.

Write a paragraph in your copybook explaining your choice.

2. What do you think is the main message Seamus Heaney would like the reader to take from this poem?

3. This poem contains examples of the following techniques:

(a) onomatopoeia/sound effects (b) imagery (c) rhyming scheme (d) colloquial language

(e) sonnet (f) simile

Identify examples of each of the techniques above and explain the impact they have on the message of the poem and on you as a reader.