

JC English Christmas poetry: 'A Christmas Childhood' by Patrick Kavanagh

Pre-reading

Write down a memory of what Christmas was like for you as a child and share with your partner.

Read the poem!

'A Christmas Childhood' is by the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, who died in 1967. He is famous for writing poems about ordinary life in rural Ireland. In the poem he recalls his memories of Christmas time during his childhood in Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan.



The text of the poem is available here: <https://apoemforireland.rte.ie/shortlist/a-christmas-childhood/>

On the 'videos' section of this page, you can watch a recitation of the poem. In the audio section there is an audio clip containing the reactions of ordinary Irish people to the poem.

First impression

Use this box to write down your first impression of the poem. What lines stood out to you? What do you think was the main feeling/mood of the poem? Are there any images that you found striking?

Copy the following table into your copybook and fill in your answers:

Theme (what you think is the main message of the poem)	I think the theme of the poem is...
Imagery (where the poet uses words to paint a vivid image in your mind)	Quote: Explain in your own words:
Personification (where something that is not human is given human characteristics)	Quote: What effect does this create?
Onomatopoeia (a word sounds like the sound that is being described e.g. plop, splash, drip)	Quote: What effect does this create?
Alliteration (repeated consonant sounds in a line)	Quote: What effect does this create?
Assonance (repeated vowel sounds in a line)	Quote: What effect does this create?

Response journal

Write your own personal response to the poem 'A Christmas Childhood'. You can be as creative as you wish for this task.

For example, you could:

- draw a picture
- write a diary entry for that evening from the point of view of the mother/father
- write a description of a person, place or thing that might seem quite ordinary, but has a special meaning to you
- describe your own feelings about the poem