

Teaching notes

Pre-reading:

1. Storm soundscape

Get students to sit in a circle on the floor, and join them. The student to the left of you must copy the sounds you create and then each student in turn should pass this sound around the circle, gradually building until everyone is making the noise. The teacher should then adapt the noise once the first action has gone all the way round. Work through the following:

- 1) Rubbing hands together (creating sound of wind)
- 2) Rubbing hands and whistling (stronger wind)
- 3) Tapping fingers on the floor (light rain)
- 4) Tapping hands on the floor (heavier rain)
- 5) Drumming feet on the floor (loud rain)

You can then do these in reverse, letting the 'storm' abate. This can help set the atmosphere, perhaps before doing the 'Storm poetry' activity below.

2. Storm poetry

Create a storm in your own classroom by getting students to create their own poetry considering the nature of a storm. Display the word 'storm' on the board and put lots of slips of paper on the students' desks. Give students two minutes to write down all the words they associate with a storm, one on each piece of paper. You could provide extra prompts, such as the five senses, emotions and effects to fuel their imagination.

Once this is complete, collect the slips in a box and tell students there will be a 'word storm'. Empty the box (ideally from a height) to create the illusion. Students should then collect a range of slips so ideas are shared across the class.

Give students the challenge to then create a storm poem from the words they have collected.

Differentiation opportunities:

- 1) Use all the words, but try three different orders and choose the one you think works best
- 2) Use all the words, but add in some of your own ideas and language to extend them
- 3) Use all the words, ensuring you extend them to include one example of simile, metaphor and personification.

Reading and approaching the poem

Divide the class into three sections. One section should focus on words linked to **safety and strength**, one section should focus on words linked to **nature** and the last section should focus on words linked to **threat and fear**.

Get students to read the poem first and note the words for their category on the 'First responses' activity sheet. Then read the poem aloud to them, asking the students to join in and say the words with you that link to their given focus. Follow this with a discussion of students' choices as a class.

First responses

As you read 'Storm on the Island', focus on the topic you have been given from the table below. Write down all the words that you think are relevant. Once you are done, choose the two words you think help create atmosphere and setting most and explain why. Be prepared to share your ideas!

Safety and strength	Nature	Threat and fear

Word choices and reasons

Word 1)

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Word 2)

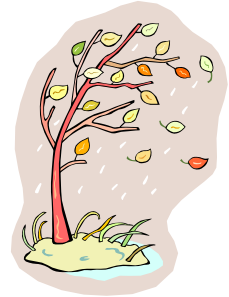
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Developing your ideas: key definitions and questions

- 1) Look up the following words in the dictionary to help aid your understanding of the poem:
 - a. wizened
 - b. stooks
 - c. pummels
 - d. savage
 - e. strafes
 - f. salvo
 - g. bombarded



- 2) Which words and phrases suggest that the island is likely to be strong against the storm?
- 3) What effect does the word 'we' have at the start of the poem? How would it be different if the poem started with 'I' instead?
- 4) Which words linked to the sense of sound are used in lines 6-9? For each one, write down what atmosphere you think Heaney is creating through these word choices.
- 5) Where do you think the tone changes in the poem from one which is more thoughtful to one which is more fearful or doubtful?
- 6) What technique is used in the phrase 'spits like a tame cat'? What does this help readers envision about the nature of the storm?
- 7) What do you notice about the structure of the poem (e.g. line lengths, shape on the page, use of enjambment and caesura)? Why might this be appropriate for a poem about a storm?
- 8) What impression do the last four lines leave us with? What is the storm really like? How does the speaker respond to it?

Extension Activities

- 1) The first eight letters of the poem spell 'Stormont', where the Northern Ireland Executive meet. The building has long been associated with politics. Does this add a different dimension to the poem and its meaning? Can you link the idea of a storm and its effect to politics?
- 2) Write an analytical paragraph answering the question:

How does Heaney present violence in nature in 'Storm on the Island'?

Summarising key ideas

The statements here go through key ideas of the poem chronologically. For each one:

- draw a picture to highlight Heaney's idea
- find the quote to support this.

	Idea 1: They have built sturdy and hard wearing houses on the island.
	Quote:
	Idea 2: The island is barren of any agriculture or vegetation.
	Quote:
	Idea 3: If trees were present, the wind of the storm would be a less frightening experience because we could see it more easily; instead, the wind's invisibility is disturbing.
	Quote:
	Idea 4: Traditionally the sea is considered in a positive light but here this is not the case.
	Quote:
	Idea 5: With the storm described using war imagery, the islanders just have to wait for it to finish.
	Quote
	Idea 6: Heaney questions how real the threat of the storm actually is - is it ironic that we sometimes fear nothing?
	Quote: