

Irish Poets

Aims of lesson

- To present the work and subject matter of a selection of Irish poets
- To show how a selection of Irish texts can be used to develop students' literacy skills and critical thinking skills

Objectives

- To know some facts about the subject matter of a selection of Irish poets
- To participate in oral and written exercises inspired by a selection of Irish poems with a focus on feelings, language and performance

Seamus Heaney 1939 -2013 Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995

Blackberry Picking

Late August, given heavy rain and sun
for a full week, the blackberries would ripen
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot
among others, red, green, hard as a knot.
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet
like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it
leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for
picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger
sent us out with milk-cans, pea-tins, jam-pots

where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills
we trekked and picked until the cans were full,
until the tinkling bottom had been covered
with green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned
like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered
with thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush
the fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
that all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

Activity 1: Focus on vocabulary

Record interesting vocabulary in *Blackberry Picking* using the following headings. ■

- Vibrant verbs
- Astonishing adjectives
- Startling similes
- Amazing metaphors

Activity 2: Focus on vocabulary

Choose alternative words that you think will bring the writing alive in *Blackberry Picking* using the following headings:

- Vibrant verbs
- Astonishing adjectives
- Startling similes
- Amazing metaphors

Eavan Boland 1944 –

This Moment

A neighbourhood.
At dusk.

Things are getting ready
to happen
Out of sight.

Stars and moths.
And rinds slanting around fruit.

But not yet.

One tree is black.
One window is yellow as butter.

A woman leans down to catch a child
who has run into her arms
this moment.

Stars rise.

Moths flutter.

Apples sweeten in the dark.

Activity 3: Alternative Titles

Give an example of an alternative title for this poem.

- **Think** individually about the answer (1 min).
- **Pair** with a partner and discuss the individual answers (2 mins).
- **Share** ideas with the rest of the class.

Activity 4:

Give examples of other moments that could be captured in a suburban neighbourhood at dusk
(pairwork)