



# English

## Year 13 Seamus Heaney Homeplace Trip

Abi Dreening



On a grey, drowsy and cold February morning in 2023, Year 13 English Literature students travelled to Bellaghy to visit the home place of Seamus Heaney. Excited by the prospect of a free lunch and skipping class, we embarked on our journey north into the life of the brilliant poet Seamus Heaney.

After over an hour on the bus, we had already begun to collapse into sleep as the 'cat-wailing' that was supposed to be singing, the constant cracking of knuckles and the loud munching on food provided us with little entertainment. We eagerly awaited our arrival to Heaney's Homeplace.

Upon arrival we were taken into the lecture hall, separated into two groups and our tour of Heaney's life began. Our guide showed us around the interactive exhibit, which included 'the web of words', but our attention was instantly drawn to something that proved to be of much greater interest to many. Something better. One thing mattered more than all the rest. The brilliant Conway Stewart Pen! Our dream of seeing the magnificent pen (despite it not being the one Heaney used) was now within our reach and we were delighted to see the subject of one of

Heaney's most loved poems. The photo taken does not do it justice!

In the main part of the exhibit we were presented with headsets, which allowed us to listen to Heaney's booming voice through the earphones. Different numbers were located throughout the exhibit, which we were able to type into the device and listen to Heaney talking about his life, his family and his poems. After months of studying, analysing and carefully deconstructing Heaney's work, it was incredible to hear his poems being brought to life.

Following the tour, we attended a lecture on two of the poems that were named within our AS specification, 'Had I Not Been Awake' by Seamus Heaney and 'Acquainted With The Night' by Robert Frost. The lecture proved beneficial, aiding our understanding as we continued to prepare for our Unit

One English Literature Module and it provided us with an insight into what university lectures are like. After a slightly questionable lunch, we split up into study groups with university students and other English teachers to discuss our thoughts on the poems.

In no time at all, it was time to begin our journey back to Banbridge. I can safely say that this trip greatly enhanced our understanding and love of the poems written by Seamus Heaney. I would highly recommend anyone studying English Literature or with a general interest in poetry to try and get down to the exhibit, as long as they remember to bring a packed lunch!



# Creative Writing

## Story Openings 9E

Mrs Hetherington's Year 9 class selected images as inspiration for their creative writing. Their story openings (inspired by these) may be found below...

### Damaged Souls

Alexandra Irvine



Abandoned and lonely. Destroyed and demolished. I remember how things used to be... before 'they' came. Lively, joyful, bright and colourful. We were a town just like any other, yet they still chose our little, old, peaceful village. They chose our lives to ruin. Our lives to sabotage. Our lives to shatter into a million pieces.

Let's take it back to the day they arrived. My life was perfect. Everything was going great: good grades; fabulous friends; and I was doing excellent in my extracurricular activities.

Walking into class confidently for the first day - that's when I saw them. Unnaturally beautiful. Tall and slender. Yet there was something about their faces that frightened me; I couldn't quite put my finger on it.

There were seven of them standing all together isolated and extroverted

almost as if they were all lone wolves, watching their prey from afar. That's when one of them strode graciously towards me and my gut feeling was telling me something bad was about to happen. My heart raced; beating loudly like a drum. Although nothing happened at that moment my instinct was still telling me I shouldn't be around them.

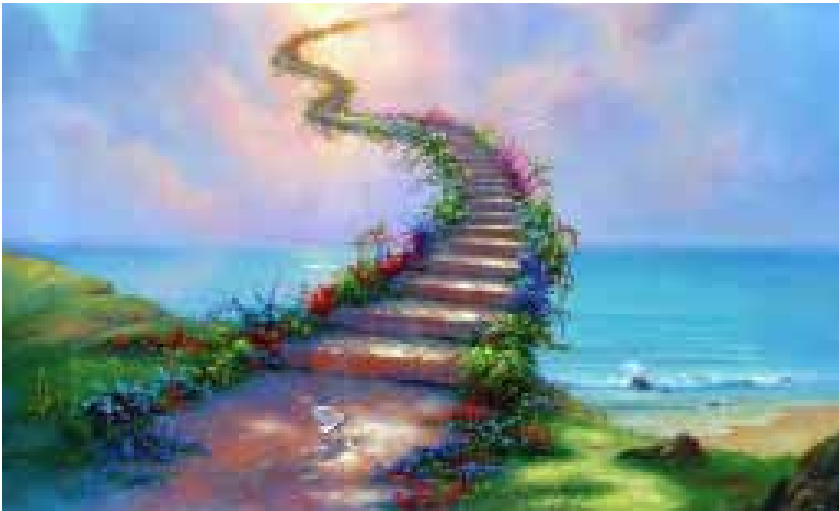
I watched them every day that fateful week. They were nothing out of the ordinary but they still caught my attention. That's when I saw him out that night...

Approaching his catch... I watched - terrified - my eyes widening in horror as his kill sank to the ground. That was the moment I realised; the world around me was not at all how it seemed. I didn't know what death-defying secret he and his family were hiding... But I was about to find out.



# Perfect Home

Adam Gwyn



I thought were, "This is it." Then it all. Went. BLACK.

I woke up somewhere extremely different from the hellscape I had just sprinted through. The molten lavas were replaced by beautiful lakes and waterfalls. The horrific, horrible creatures had been replaced by beautiful plants, flowers and trees. The darkness had been lit.

Looking behind me, I noticed something strange. My back was completely unscathed! Not a single trace of harm could be spotted. Then I saw what was behind my back: a staircase reaching out like an arm; bordered by rows of majestic, mythical plants, which I doubt were from planet earth... If that's where I am...

Running, I looked over my battered, beaten and bruised shoulder; my sins were coming back to get me. There were huge "things" that could crush all 206 bones in your body in one (giant) step, and lots of tiny pea sized ones that would nibble your body from the feet up.

Tired, I thought my legs were going to fall off from how stupidly fast I was running- if they weren't already gnawed off by the little gremlins.

Suddenly, a pain- as sharp as a butcher's knife-jolted into my back and spread slowly and painfully throughout the rest of my body. I was hit. The last words

"Nowhere to go but up... Literally!" I thought to myself, enthusiastically. Little did I realise how deceiving first looks can be; there was a lot more than the perfect home I was hoping for...

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# English

## The Beast

Edie Scott 9E

Mesmerisingly entranced- yet terrified to the core- this young, clueless new recruit stared on at the Beast that loomed before him. It was like nothing he had ever seen before; nothing his mind could have conjured up; not even from the darkest depths of his 'Fantasiae'- his imagination- could he have conjured up what his eyes were now witnessing.

He had heard tales of these titanic beings; but these were mere stories- myths and legends to warn of the jeopardy and peril of disobedience.

The warrior had been forewarned of the raging whirlpool of uncertainty that lay in wait outside of the gates that seemed to restrain every living fibre of his adventure seeking soul.

Now it was his moment to explore. Ever since war had broken out selfishness had laced its ghostly tentacles around each and every leaving soul on 'terra'. He had been taught untruthfully of the crimes of the Beast. They were callous; they were cold-blooded; they were cruel. Now was the oblivious warrior's first look into the eyes of the Beast.

Naively, he expected a menacing outline, eyes set ablaze with a crazed freaky or vengeful fire, terrifying claws to lacerate flesh as though it was butter. Bone-chilling; terror-bringing; fear-instilling monsters... exactly how it had been described in the storybooks. However, what he saw could not have been further from his previous description. The supposedly gargantuan features detailed in the legends had been replaced with a frail figure- scrawny, slight and scraggy.

Suddenly the warrior's eyes darted swiftly to the creature that lay in the

Beast's palm. Benevolently, the Beast's glazed eyes gazed down fondly at the wounded creature he held. It was at that moment, the warrior realised the enormity of this exaggerated misconception of these Beasts. Here stood a creature who for centuries had protected the land, but had failed to withhold the titanium force of greed which had engulfed the humans of earth with their selfishly stupid sense of superiority and a lustful demand for all-knowing power. Peace was what was needed; power was what was wanted.



The Beast that stood- not ten metres away- was the last of his kind. Solemnly, he stood as the hills that enshrouded this once tranquil valley reverberated with the petrifying sound of endless shelling. He was once the kindest creature in the land; however, the endlessly gruelling years of back-breaking battle and arduous attack had crushed his soul back to whatever lesser-evolved humanoid bones it had.

Constant calls and crashes of his called comrades had reduced him to the verge of a nearly heartless being. After all, tears whether shed in public, or private, were of little use in war. Yet, fragments of kindness still remained in his heart.

Tired, the Beast gazed on to the fires of the fight. He knew if nothing were to change he truly was sentenced for a life of endless misery, condemned to a pointless existence, punctuated with undeniably eventual defeat. Dishevelled, the Beast shuddered heavily at the sound of a nearby

gunshot that shattered the air like glass. Shards of shrapnel sent ripples cascading across the water's glossy surface. The battlefield was a boisterous ballroom of bombs, bullets, blasts and bangs.

Tightly, the Beast fluted protectively on to the wounded rabbit that lay limply inches from his comforting grasp- rough palms soothing the innocent creature's wounds, seemingly instantaneously. No shred of mercy was spared by the enemy, just pure blood-thirsty greed- the core of every sin that snaked its grasp around earth.

Guiltily, the warrior- ashamed by the actions of his comrades- crept into the towering trees. He cast a final glance into the Beast's eyes. Here

stood a magnificent being, innocent; a helpless victim to the selfish clothes of trees; a forgotten veteran of peaceful years gone by- simply, misunderstood. For a fleeting moment the pair stood intertwined in solidarity. Both filled with the utmost desire for justice. Suddenly, an almighty 'CRASH' flurried from the air. Then silence... silence... silence...



# The Blood Dragon

## Isla Bell 9E

The lost, lonesome and long-forgotten city of Arbacu sat asleep in a cradle of darkness. Its cobbled streets were empty; carts lay overturned in the market square. Its grey granite buildings were crumbling to dust and the stench of burning blood filled the air. Not a living thing remained. Well, that's what the search and rescue team thought...

*A few days earlier...*

I sat by the fire as the sun woke from its peaceful slumber. We had been travelling for three weeks now and there was still no sign of the lost city of Arbacu. *We should be there by now!* I thought, angrily fiddling with the steel spoon.

"Hey kid, bring us the stew already! We're starving!" a voice called across the campsite.

Whipping around, I saw one of the adventurers I was travelling with. His name was Sergeant Bakers- an old army veteran. He absolutely hated my guts and I hated his. When he was only 16, he joined the army in World War II; he's had a wooden leg ever since.

"Alright, alright coming!" I growled back, ladling the stew into bowls. It looked like a goat had eaten a sock and two litres of water and vomited it back up-not to mention it was as lumpy as the hills we'd just walked over. Slowly,

I stood up and walked over to him. Unfortunately, I tripped over a stone and the stew flew through the air and landed on him.

"Why you little..." he began, but then stopped, a grin spreading across the field of the wrinkles that made up his face. "Lads, he's found it! He found the teleporter!"

Suddenly, the space was full of people pushing and shoving, trying to see. I got into a crouch and realised what I'd tripped over- it was a small circular stone embedded with gemstones and jewels. In the centre was a symbol. The symbol. The symbol of the Arabacu. The legend said that if you found this pebble, you would be instantly transported to Arbacu; if you pressed the symbol, which- of course- we all did.

All of a sudden, everything went black and I felt my feet leave the ground and then...

Bang! Snap! Crunch! My right leg was on fire. I'd broken a bone on what seemed to be oddly shaped bits of quartz. No, that wasn't right. I looked closer. My hair stood on end; my skin turned white; I was numb and sprouted all over my flesh.

I was lying on a pile of human bones! That's when I heard them. All my comrades were screaming, shrieking and screeching. I heard massive

footsteps; the snapping of bones; the drip-drip-drip of blood; claws clicking on tiles; the sound of bat-like wings and then... silence.

I looked. The bodies of my fallen associates lay there, blood pouring from gashes on their legs, arms, heads and sides. But no sign of the creature that did this. A roar of - what sounded like thunder- echoed through the cathedral I was in, shattering a window. Rain poured in. Just a storm.

I made the mistake. I looked up. There, perched on six of the rafters, was a dragon. A blood dragon. It glided down, eyes glistening like black diamonds, voids in its ruby red head.

"Stay back!" I yelled, my eyes wide with fear.

It landed.

"Sleth ic mar," It said.

I knew what it said somehow. *Sleth ic mar*. You are me. Boom! A flash of scarlet. When I opened my eyes and looked in a puddle, I saw what it meant. I was now a blood dragon!

My name is  
Lilian Woods  
and this is my  
story...