Comparison notes

Heaney’s collective voice begins with practical confidence before fear unsettles it. Wordsworth recalls a personal experience in which confidence gives way to awe and a lasting disturbance. Compare the invisible storm with the apparently pursuing peak, and explain how each challenges human control.

Storm on the Island

One 19-line stanza, predominantly blank verse; conversational address gives way to military imagery.

prepared

Declarative opening: The initial confidence becomes a position the poem tests.

tame cat

Simile: Familiarity offers a false expectation of safety.

savage

Tonal reversal: One adjective turns domestic comfort into danger.

huge nothing

Paradox: The unseen force feels enormous despite its intangibility.

Development and tone

Opening houses — Confident: The collective speaker lists practical measures that seem to establish security.

Sea and wind — Unsettled: An apparently familiar environment turns threatening and attacks the home.

Last lines — Fearful and questioning: The threat cannot be grasped; the ending makes fear itself part of the problem.

Extract from The Prelude

An autobiographical verse extract in unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse.

an act of stealth

Moral diction: The speaker recognises secrecy and wrongdoing even before the apparently pleasurable adventure begins.

Went heaving through the water like a swan;

Simile: The youthful rower imagines graceful command of the water.

a huge peak, black and huge,

Repetition: Scale overwhelms the earlier graceful self-image.

a trouble to my dreams.

Psychological aftermath: The event continues after physical danger has passed.

Development and tone

Taking the boat — Secretly excited: The apparent adventure begins with confidence mixed with awareness of wrongdoing.

Mountain encounter — Awed and afraid: A peak appears to pursue the rower; the landscape seems capable of independent action.

After returning — Disturbed and reflective: The adult narrator describes an enduring change in the child's thoughts and dreams.