

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

PATNA UNIVERSITY

SEMESTER III

SEAMUS HEANEY

Life and Times

From Poetry Foundation

- Heaney was raised in County Derry, and later lived for many years in Dublin.
- He was the author of over 20 volumes of poetry and criticism, and edited several widely used anthologies.
- He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995 "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past."
- As Blake Morrison noted in his work *Seamus Heaney*, the author is "that rare thing, a poet rated highly by critics and academics yet popular with 'the common reader.'"
- The *New York Review of Books* essayist Richard Murphy described Heaney as "the poet who has shown the finest art in presenting a coherent vision of Ireland, past and present."
- Traditionalist, talks a lot about the "pre-modern" worlds.
- Heaney once described himself in the *New York Times Book Review* as someone who "emerged from a hidden, a buried life and entered the realm of education."
- Heaney once noted: "I learned that my local County Derry [childhood] experience, which I had considered archaic and irrelevant to 'the modern world' was to be trusted. They taught me that trust and helped me to articulate it."
- Heaney has a general spirit of reverence towards the past.
- Heaney "makes you see, hear, smell, taste this life, which in his words is not provincial, but parochial; provincialism hints at the minor or the mediocre, but all parishes, rural or urban, are equal as communities of the human spirit," noted *Newsweek* correspondent Jack Kroll.
- James Longenbach in the *Nation*, "Heaney wants to think of poetry not only as something that intervenes in the world, redressing or correcting imbalances, but also as something that must be redressed—re-established, celebrated as itself."

- Heaney's first foray into the world of translation began with the Irish lyric poem *Buile Suibhne*. The work concerns an ancient king who, cursed by the church, is transformed into a mad bird-man and forced to wander in the harsh and inhospitable countryside.
- As a translator, Heaney's most famous work is the translation of the epic Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* (2000). Considered groundbreaking because of the freedom he took in using modern language, the book is largely credited with revitalizing what had become something of a tired chestnut in the literary world.

Some Points related to the subject of his poems and his craft of writing

- For Heaney, the keyword is Division. . Some such areas from where subjects and ideas for his poems come - His geographical position between England and Ireland.
 - Catholic vs Protestants
 - Language divisions
 - Division of Loyalty
 - Between family and poetry
- Follower of romanticism
- Choice of everyday language
- Memory and return to childhood