

★ varying syllabic patterns

1<sup>st</sup> AUTHOLOGY  
from DEATH OF A NATURALIST (1966)

wandering thought pattern

free verse poetry

Digging

excavation is navigating

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Small, compact, → unimportant? comfortability  
With Guns - Ireland

Under my window, a clean rasping sound

sibilance

When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:

alliteration

My father, digging, I look down

effect of thinking aloud

paints images with words

simile, slight allusion to violence

In the moment, present tense

★ sound is very evocative

enjambement

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds

Bends low, comes up twenty years away

Stooping in rhythm through potato drills

Where he was digging.

link to the past, how long this has been

★ exploration of self and roots

★ revival of memory, a journey in to the past

word choice

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft

Against the inside knee was levered firmly.

He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep

To scatter new potatoes that we picked,

Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

religion

By God, the old man could handle a spade.

Just like his old man.

Sense of awe

tradition

My grandfather cut more turf in a day

Than any other man on Toner's bog.

Once I carried him milk in a bottle

Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up

To drink it, then fell to right away

Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods

assonance

Over his shoulder, going down and down

For the good turf. Digging.

highly sensory

onomatopoeia

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap

Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge

Through living roots awaken in my head.

But I've no spade to follow men like them.

curt word choice, sound it when put together

→ realisation of his break with tradition

\* repeated opening

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it. firm, asserting

compensation + independence

even further into the past  
simplistic view of poverty

SETTING:  
Set in rural, local, traditional environment  
- significant to his sense of self

reference to his local environment

awe, pride in traditional values, family pride, expectation to follow

direct link between Digging image and personal roots + history

back to present

★ writing is just as worthy as being a labourer

★ navigating his life as he breaks from tradition + discovering himself as a poet.

TITLE:

- ★ literal digging for food + for a living
- ★ digging into the past
- ★ unearthing his roots and culture

Sensory language: strong sense of PLACE

