

links to  
content/mood/tone of  
opening stanzas

**'The Early Purges'**

to remove or  
suppress  
something  
unwanted

Suggests the  
'purge' is  
Aremature

Oxymoronic  
angelic nature of  
6 year old alongside  
brutality of  
actions

I was six when I first saw kittens drown.

Heaney was  
young and impressionable  
too young to be  
exposed to  
this shocking  
incident -

Suggests a lack  
of care

Unexpected to be  
used in ear shot  
of an infant

Dan Taggart pitched them, 'the scraggy wee shits',

Clearly a vivid  
memory

Into a bucket; a frail metal sound,



emphasises the  
helplessness of kittens  
this is horrific

Sibilance -  
Slows pace of line  
Creates sinister tone by  
replicating the sound of kittens

Soft paws scraping like mad. But their tiny din

reveals desperation  
of animals to  
cling to life.

Oxymoron highlights  
desperation and  
vulnerability

Was soon soused. They were slung on the snout

w/c reinforces lack  
of care and attention  
given to young  
creatures

Of the pump and the water pumped in.

the use of a  
water pump is a  
physical act -  
Dan Taggart has to  
contribute to murder

'Sure, isn't it better for them now?' Dan said.

- A justification of killing implies kittens have no purpose
- Kittens will suffer less now than later



Like wet gloves they bobbed and shone till he sluced

Simile implies  
he is deeply scarred  
and confused

w/c  
suggests a  
lack of care

w/c  
treated like  
waste

Them out on the dunghill glossy and dead

inversion highlights  
finality + leaves a  
lasting impression

monosyllabic reinforces  
horror and shock  
at what is  
seen

Suggests something  
healthy but here they're  
simply wet

x Immediate aftermath of event

x New stanza suggests new stage in his life

Suddenly frightened, for days | sadly hung

highlights emotional  
turmoil Heaney felt

Round the yard, watching the three sogged remains



w/c  
emphasises how  
Heaney feels -  
limp + currently  
unable to move past  
this incident

Turn mealy and crisp as old summer dung

Now they  
changing to look  
like other waste

it is representative  
of the event's effect  
upon Heaney gradually releasing shock  
of original killings

Enjambement  
reinforces the shift  
in Heaney's life and  
moving  
forward

abhor

Until I forgot them. But the fear came back

Caesura suggests  
the fear is inescapable

Does Dan have  
a sadistic nature?  
Does he enjoy it?

When Dan trapped big rats, snared rabbits, shot crows

list highlights  
w/ how many  
were killed +  
the brutality of  
farm life

Or, with a sickening tug, pulled old hens' necks.

w/c  
graphic description  
of death describes  
Hearsey's own feelings  
at this point



Indicates a turning point

Still, living displaces false sentiments

- Tone + language changes
- Shouldn't be sentimental when looking at animals and their lack of purpose
- infers that he has looked back at an event in his childhood that seemed dramatic and is dismissing it.

refers to  
the present

And now when shrill pups are prodded to drown

alliteration  
reinforces lack of  
care + attention -  
this is a matter-of-  
fact event

w/c  
suggests the pups  
are young but he has  
aged to where he doesn't care -  
mirroring Don Taggart's attitude

Deaths have no effect - he simply moves on.

a more mature Heaney who understands the reasoning

I just shrug, 'Bloody pups'. It makes sense:

mirrors attitude of Dan at beginning of poem

RSPCA  
slogan

incisive w/c  
suggests Heaney  
has become harsh  
and practical

Prevention of cruelty talk cuts ice in town

Tone becomes  
utterly dismissive  
and contemptuous

Refers to urban areas  
Contrasts with farm where  
Heaney grew up. Urban  
people don't understand  
the necessity of death

Refers to city people  
He has excluded them  
telling us they are outsiders

irony - death is  
a huge part of  
life

Where they consider death unnatural

A part of life but  
he is suggesting that  
people from urban areas  
cannot deal with death

No longer kittens/pups  
they are vermin

But on well-run farms pests have to be kept down.

desensitisation to  
animals. suggest Heaney  
has fully matured both in  
age and thinking

Do we believe  
what Heaney is saying to  
us? sounds like a  
farmer's manual -  
not convincing

- Poem is written in Terza Rima characterised by Dante - suggestion of hell/death/suffering

(Terza Rima = 3 line stanzas with rhyme scheme ABA, CDC, EFE...)