

Reading Skill

WORD CHOICE

Poets select words carefully. They often choose words for their connotations—shades of meaning beyond basic definitions. When you read a poem, pay close attention to word choices that seem striking. For example, Heaney describes his father’s boot as “coarse.” “Coarse” conveys a sense of something rough, plain, welll-worn. The word “nestled” in the same line conveys a sense of softness and comfort.

Other word choices are important because of the way the words sound. A poet might choose a word with soft consonants to create an image of silence. In Words that reflect the sounds made by the things they describe, such as *buzz*, *hiss*, *splat*, and *thud*, are examples of onomatopoeia.

Directions: Find examples of strong or unusual word choices in each poem. Describe the connotations of each word and tell whether or not the word has any special sound appeal.

“Digging”

Word Choice	Connotation	Sound

“The Horses”

Word Choice	Connotation	Sound