

# SEAMUS HEANEY

## Poems and Plays

Course #:	22S-SHY
Format:	Seminar
Moderator:	Lise Armstrong
Date and Time:	Thurs, 9:30 to 11:30 am 10 weeks, starting 2/21/2022
Location:	Applewood, Amherst Meeting Room
Max # of Participants:	15
Auditors Accepted:	Yes
Max # of Auditors:	Up to 2

### PURPOSE:

We will study a good number of Heaney's poems and sample excerpts from his translations of Old English, Greek, and Latin poetry and drama.

### DESCRIPTION:

Seamus Heaney (1939-2014) now surpasses Yeats as Ireland's most admired poet. His poetry commands a world-wide audience. The citation for his 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature reads "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth which exalt the everyday miracles and the living past."

Heaney, oldest of nine children, grew up on a farm in Northern Ireland and benefited from a university education that enabled him to read and translate classics such as *Beowulf* and the *Aeneid*. His subject matter ranges over Ireland's history and politics, rural life, family relationships, and the craft of poetry.

Heaney's drama *The Cure at Troy* is the source of the verse used in Joe Biden's recent political campaign:

"History says, *Don't hope / On this side of the grave. / But then, once in a lifetime / The longed-for tidal wave / Of justice can rise up, / And hope and history rhyme.*"

### ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS:

Participants will be responsible for reading the background material provided by the moderator and leading discussions of two or three poems, one or more assigned by the moderator and some to be chosen by the participant. The class as a whole will discuss the translations.

### RESOURCES:

These books are recommended but not required:

*100 Poems*, by Seamus Heaney (all the poems we will be studying are in this book but they may also be found elsewhere)

*The Aeneid Book VI*, a new verse translation by Seamus Heaney

*Beowulf*, a new verse translation by Seamus Heaney

*The Burial at Thebes*, a version of Sophocles' *Antigone* by Seamus Heaney

*The Cure at Troy*, a version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* by Seamus Heaney

### ABOUT THE MODERATORS:

Elizabeth Armstrong has moderated over twenty seminars, mostly in literature. Her two most recent ones were on poetry.