**Mid –Term Break** by Seamus Heaney

I sat all morning in the college sick bay  
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.  
At ten o'clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying -  
He had always taken funerals in his stride -  
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram   
When I came in, and I was embarrassed   
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble';   
Whispers informed strangers that I was the eldest,   
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.   
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived   
With the corpse, stanched and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops   
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him   
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple.   
He lay in a four foot box, as in his cot.   
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four foot box, a foot for every year.

**Discussion Questions**

**1.** What event does this poem narrate in Heaney’s life?

2. The title “Mid-Term Break” probably makes you think of a holiday. When did you know something was wrong? Give me the line. What else could mid-term “break” stand for?

3. What does Heaney mean by the knelling of the bells? What is the literal purpose and metaphorical purpose?

4. Provide examples of assonance.

5. What does the last line do for you? How is the speaker different by that point than during the day?

**Out, Out** by Robert Frost

The buzz-saw snarled and rattled in the yard  
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,  
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.  
And from there those that lifted eyes could count  
Five mountain ranges one behind the other  
Under the sunset far into Vermont.  
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,  
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.  
And nothing happened: day was all but done.  
Call it a day, I wish they might have said  
To please the boy by giving him the half hour  
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.  
His sister stood beside them in her apron  
To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw,  
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,  
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—  
He must have given the hand. However it was,  
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!  
The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,  
As he swung toward them holding up the hand  
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep  
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—  
Since he was old enough to know, big boy  
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—  
He saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off—  
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"  
So. But the hand was gone already.  
The doctor put him in the dark of ether.  
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.  
And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.  
No one believed. They listened at his heart.  
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.  
No more to build on there. And they, since they  
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.and hold it up to the light

**Discussion Questions**

1. Provide an example of onomatopoeia.

2. What is the story behind the poem?

3. Describe your reaction to the poem.

4. Do you feel people move on perhaps too quickly after one has died?

5. Explain the reference to *Macbeth*.

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening** by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know. \_\_\_\_\_  
His house is in the village, though;\_\_\_\_\_  
He will not see me stopping here \_\_\_\_\_  
To watch his woods fill up with snow. \_\_\_\_\_  
  
My little horse must think it queer\_\_\_\_\_  
To stop without a farmhouse near\_\_\_\_\_  
Between the woods and frozen lake \_\_\_\_\_  
The darkest evening of the year. \_\_\_\_\_  
  
He gives his harness bells a shake\_\_\_\_\_  
To ask if there is some mistake. \_\_\_\_\_  
The only other sound's the sweep \_\_\_\_\_\_  
Of easy wind and downy flake. \_\_\_\_\_\_

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep, \_\_\_\_\_\_  
But I have promises to keep, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
And miles to go before I sleep,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
And miles to go before I sleep.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions**

1. Label the rhyme scheme of this poem.
2. The first stanza presents the situation. What is going on in the first stanza?
3. What is the imagery of this poem? (time of day, season, feeling)
4. Why does he stop? Why does he stop *there*?
5. Why are the horse’s thoughts included in this poem? The horse acts as a foil. What do you think that might mean?
6. Is there a conflict presented in this poem? If so, what is it? Explain the resolution.
7. What are the final two lines for? What do they mean and what purpose do they serve?
8. What other meanings could the last two lines serve?

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening:** An Alternate Ending

Compose an alternate ending for Robert Frost’s poem. Include a minimum of two stanzas following the rhyme scheme Frost used (in the first three stanzas). Your ending should explain where the speaker of this poem is going or why he is stopping in the woods at the time of the poem. Be creative!