**Mid-Term Break**

by Seamus Heaney

I sat all morning in the college sick bay

Counting bells knelling classes to a close.

At two 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 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 the four-foot box as in his cot.

No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four-foot box, a foot for every year.

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