

(30 minutes) Heaney has remarked in an interview that “A moving poem doesn’t just mean that it touches you, it means it has to move itself along as a going linguistic concern.” Choose a poem and discuss how it moves.

Student N

### From Cradle to Grave

Emily Dickinson’s “I cried at Pity – not at Pain –” begins and ends with a child’s cry, yet the move from that initial sound of protest to the last sobs of a final sleep is as great a transition as that from pain to pity and from life to death. Linked by this cry, there is a movement from “Poor Child” to “Rich people”: a number shift from singular to plural, a growth difference from young to old, a status change from capitalized “Child” to lowercase “people,” and a definitive transformation from qualitative to quantitative wealth. This simple yet staggering movement, is confounding for yet another reason; the move informs of an earlier move where “children, made of Gold” become “poor” because these lessened uncapitalized people value the wrong kind of gold.

What kills the child, then, her body and spirit (“health and laughter”), moving her down from golden to poor, is this pity, also expressed as a sound coming from a person’s mouth, simple words that can make one “God willed” child faint. From “Heaven” to underground is a long way to move for such a short poem.