

FOLLOWER - 1966

My father worked with a horse plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horses strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the win
And fit the bright-pointed sock.
The sod rolled over without breaking.
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hobnailed wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
All I ever did was follow
In his broad shadow around the farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.

1. Looking at the first half of the poem, what do you think Heaney most admired about his father?
2. Who is the "follower" in this poem?
3. Find an example of simile in the first stanza. What does this tell about Heaney's father?
4. The poem is about a man ploughing with his horse. How is this reinforced by the structure and rhyming scheme of the poem?
5. Look at the enjambment and stanza break of stanza's two and three. How does this reinforce the action being discussed?
6. How does the tone of the poem change in the final stanza? What aspect of life is Heaney discussing here?

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