

## Requiem for the Croppies Summary

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The poem *"Requiem for the Croppies"* is about the Irish Rebellion of 1798, when poor Irish farmers, called *"croppies,"* fought against the British soldiers. They were called *"croppies"* because they had short-cropped hair. The poem is written like a funeral song (requiem) for these brave men who died fighting for their country.

**Barley in the Pockets:** The poet begins by saying that the croppies kept barley grains in their coat pockets as food. They had no kitchens, no camps, and were always moving quickly because they were running from the British soldiers. They had no time to stop and cook.

**Fighting in Their Own Land:** They fought in their own country — Ireland — but still had to hide. Even priests joined them. They hid behind ditches with beggars and poor people. They were not well-trained, but they used new tactics every day. They would cut the reins of the enemy's horses with their pikes (long spears). They would make cattle run wild into the enemy troops, and then escape quickly through hedges.

**The Battle of Vinegar Hill:** Finally, they gathered at Vinegar Hill, a famous battle site in Wexford, Ireland. Thousands of croppies faced the British cannons with only scythes (farming tools) in their hands. The poet says the hillside *"blushed"* and was soaked in blood. It shows how many Irish rebels died that day. It was a terrible defeat.

**Barley Growing from the Graves:** After the battle, the dead bodies of the croppies were buried without coffins. The barley from their coats sprouted from the ground. The speaker says: *"Barley grew up out of our grave."* This final image is very powerful. It means that their deaths gave life to the Irish freedom movement. Through this poem, Heaney honors them as national heroes.