

The Skunk Summary

Writer: Seamus Heaney | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

The poem “*The Skunk*” is about Heaney’s deep love and longing for his wife when he was away from her. It mixes memories, emotions, and images of nature to show how much he misses her presence.

The Poet Remembers His Wife: Seamus Heaney was living alone in California for some time, far from his wife, who was in Ireland. Every night, he felt lonely and remembered her. He saw a skunk (a small black-and-white animal) walking near his house. This animal made him think of his wife.

The Skunk as a Symbol of His Wife: Heaney describes the skunk very carefully—its black and white stripes, its proud walk, and how it came out every night. He waited for it like waiting for a visitor. This skunk reminded him of his wife’s beauty and mystery. The way the skunk moved and searched around made him think of his wife’s movements at home.

Love and Memory: Heaney started writing love letters to his wife again. He felt as if his love was renewed. His love became fresh and strong again after many years of marriage. The smell of eucalyptus trees and the taste of wine reminded him of her. It is just like remembering her scent on a pillow.

Past and Present Connected: In the last part of the poem, Heaney remembers one night when his wife was home. She was searching in a drawer for her nightdress. Her movements, bending down and turning up, reminded him of the skunk’s movements.

Main Idea: The poem shows love, memory, and desire that stay alive even after years of marriage. The skunk becomes a symbol of his wife’s charm. The poet’s observation of the skunk helps him feel close to her even when they are far apart.