

The Tollund Man Theme

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Themes

Violence and Sacrifice: In this poem, Heaney shows that violence and killing are not new. In ancient times, people killed others as sacrifices to please the gods, like the Tollund Man. In modern times, during “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland, people are still being killed for political or religious reasons. Heaney connects both—old and new—to show that human beings keep repeating the same cruelty. For him, the bog becomes a symbol of how death and sacrifice stay alive through history.