

Korea



By John McGahern

www.aoifesnotes.com

Opening Lines

- ❖ The story opens with a question.
- ❖ What is the effect of this?
- ❖ Does it draw us in?
- ❖ Why?
- ❖ Does the use of dialogue bring the story to life?
- ❖ Would it be different if it had begun, 'I asked my father if he had seen an execution...'?



The Boy

- ❖ Do we believe that there was any reason behind the selection of prisoners to execute?
- ❖ What words in the text support your point?
- ❖ How does McGahern make us sympathise with the young man chosen? (You might find it helpful to think back to our discussion on Frost's 'Out, Out-' here.)



- ❖ Why do you think the young man ‘clicked to attention’?
- ❖ Why did the older man not do so?
- ❖ Why do you think the writer makes a distinction between the death of the young man and the death of the older man?



The Deaths

- ❖ The older man keels over quickly, because of his hands in his pockets. His relaxed attitude contributes to his seemingly relaxed death.
- ❖ Notice the description of the older man's death: 'the hands in the pockets'. He is dehumanised by this experience.



- ❖ How does the writer show us that the younger man fought death to the last and did not accept his lot?
- ❖ ‘Merciful’ - ‘Vindictive’: Which word would you use to describe the officer’s finishing off of both men?
- ❖ Why do you think he reacted this way?

The Father

- ❖ Why do you think he is so aggressive when his son wonders if the boy stood to attention in the hope that he might get off?
- ❖ Hold onto your thoughts on this because you will have to revisit them at the end of the story.
- ❖ Hint: Does doing your best to please those in authority guarantee they will treat you well?
- ❖ What is the fundamental difference between the soldier and his officers and the



Fishing

- ❖ Could fishing be a metaphor for anything?
- ❖ Is the act of fishing deceptive in any way?
- ❖ Is it violent?

