Korea

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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?