Both Heaney's Storm on the Island and Owen's Exposure present ideas about power through focusing on the power of nature and war throughout their poems. Despite the disparity in settings, power is shown have great influence on both poets throughout their work.

Checklist for success:

* Clear links to the theme in question
* Relevant evidence used from each poem
* Comments on poetic devices and language
* Comments on poetic structure
* Comparisons made between the two poems
* Contextual links made

Compare the ways poets present ideas about power in Storm on the Island and in one other poem from 'Power and Conflict'.

Firstly, the power of nature is presented to the reader within the title of the poems. By immediately referencing a 'storm', Heaney encourages the reader to view nature negatively, as the noun 'storm' often connotes destruction and strength. The isolated setting of 'the island' implies vulnerability, and could be seen to reinforce the power of nature as there is no protection from it. Similarly, Owen's title of 'Exposure' also connotes vulnerability, and - as the poem begins - the reader learns that the World War One soldiers are exposed to the harsh weather within the trenches. The single worded title demonstrates the conditions they lived in, with nothing to protect them from the 'merciless iced east winds'.

Wind is also shown to be powerful within Storm on the Island through Heaney's use of personification. In suggesting that they 'are bombarded by the empty air', Heaney personifies the air to be a threat to the island's inhabitants. The use of the verb 'bombarded' develops the semantic field of war used by Heaney throughout the poem with words like 'salvo' and 'exploding' exemplifying the power nature had on the island, as though they are at war against the storm itself. It can be argued that the storm referenced in the poem is actually an extended metaphor for the infamous Troubles in Northern Island, therefore adding a different layer of meaning to the language of war used by Heaney as he highlights the devastation caused by the conflict at the time. Similarly, alongside the brutality of nature within Explore, Owen presents the power war held upon the soldiers in World War One (having been a soldier himself, and dying at war, Owen writes from his own personal experience). Heaney repeats the phrase ‘But nothing happens’ throughout his poem, demonstrating the boredom and unease of the soldiers as the war dragged on. The use of the conjunction ‘but’ to open the repetitive line exemplifies how the soldiers remain expectant, only to find themselves in the same situation once more, highlighting the power the war had over their lives.

Furthermore, the power nature holds over the island is shown through the repetitive nature of the storm and, as in Exposure, the islanders are constantly preparing for something to happen. In the opening line, Heaney uses the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ in suggesting that ‘we are prepared’. The use of the pronoun unites the islanders against the storm, highlighting the power it holds over them as they have to ensure that they are ready to fight it – they have to adapt to nature as it is uncontrollable and more powerful than them. This idea is furthered through the oxymoronic description of the sea ‘exploding comfortably’ which implies that this is how it is most comfortable, but the verb ‘exploding’ has devastating connotation for the island. Similarly, in Exposure Owen questions ‘is it that we are dying?’, also uniting the soldiers using the inclusive pronoun ‘we’. The rhetorical question indicates the power nature has over the soldiers as the harsh conditions leave them questioning how long they can survive, again showing that nature is uncontrollable and something much stronger than them.

Finally, Heaney highlights the power that nature has over one’s emotions. In suggesting that the storm is ‘a huge nothing that we fear’, Heaney suggests that even though they are used to the storms and know they can survive it unscathed, they still ‘fear’ it. The use of ‘fear’ illustrates the emotional impact the storm has, as fear is a powerful emotion, and the oxymoron ‘huge nothing’ shows that whilst they know their emotions are unreasonable, the storm still holds power over them. This is reinforced through Heaney’s use of the single stanza and enjambment within his poem which can be seen to reflect the pace and power of the storm as it forces the reader to continue reading with increased speed. On the other hand, in Exposure Owen presents the weather as something which should be feared, and uses separate stanzas of similar length to demonstrate the repetitive nature of life in the trenches. He also uses zoomorphism to describe the soldiers like animals as they ‘cringe in holes’ to escape the elements, showing the dehumanizing power of nature and war on the soldiers of World War One.