

# Compare the ways the poets portray war in 'attack' and 'anthem for doomed youth'

[Life](#), [Death](#)



Compare the ways the poets portray war in 'Attack' and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' Both 'Attack' and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' portray war negatively, revealing the brutality and indignity of death on the battlefield. 'Attack' explores the shock and anger during war suggesting the desperation of the soldiers whereas 'Anthem' has a calmer approach expressing the melancholic side of war. Siegfried Sassoon uses lists and strong adjectives to convey the despair and horror in 'Attack' as well as writing from the point of view of a frustrated onlooker which constructs an uncomfortable atmosphere. Wilfred Owen, however, reflects on the deaths and draws comparison using metaphors. Siegfried Sassoon acknowledges the animosity, hopelessness and distress in 'Attack'. His thoughts are centred on the destruction of humanity due to the overwhelming realisation of the intense fear and the changes of war through time. Sassoon presents the soldiers as 'Lines of grey, muttering faces' which illustrates the loss of identity at war. The poet describes the men to be 'masked with fear' suggesting the disappearance of personality and a new found anonymity. The poem is a poignant reminder that war destroys what make us human. In addition, the poet uses several adjectives to differentiate the regular setting at home to the strange scenery at war. Siegfried Sassoon describes the sun as 'wild purple' rather than its usual colour which indicates that there is a level of unfamiliarity. Sassoon includes multiple examples of personification within 'Attack' to emphasise that at war, everything is against them. He declares the 'ridge emerges' which implies the hill is a monster that is more intimidating as it roams nearer. The poet similarly describes the rising ground as a 'menacing scarred slope' which gives the same affect, yet

proposes that war has an impact on everything. Even the slope is tarnished with memories. On the contrary, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' focuses on the conception of a death of a soldier being announced to his family. The poet explores ideas about disrespect, bitterness and humility, concentrating mostly on the ceremony that they deserve yet fail to achieve. The title alone is an oxymoron in itself which reveals the themes of this poem. By using the word 'Anthem', we are to believe that Wilfred Owen will be celebrating the victory as it has connotations with glory; however he continues to explain that during war there is no honour in death. The octave presents the idea of appropriately burying the dead after their commitment and dedication, of which is answered with the sounds of the battle. Owen's use of alliteration within 'rifles' rapid rattle' carefully creates the feel of the front line likewise the technique of onomatopoeia. Wilfred Owen uses these to craft the battlefield for us to relive the situation. The further six lines travel away from the dynamic war zone to the stillness of the home front where the soldier's loved ones mourn the deaths. The sestet reflects upon the ideas already presented, acknowledging the grief of those back home and showing empathy for their losses. As the poem and curtains draw to a close, the final use of alliteration displays the slow, relaxed and calm goodbye. Within the first eight lines, Owen records the associations of death including 'passing bells' and 'funeral prayers' to show these will be absent from the soldiers' funeral. Wilfred Owen then personifies many of these images to emphasise the harshness and develop tangible illustrations for the reader, similar to Siegfried Sassoon's 'Attack'. However, this imagery is opposing to religious ideas to show the destruction that war is capable of. The choirs, prayers and

candles all highlight the preciousness of human life and are linked with religion. Owen may even have been going as far to suggest that even religion is helpless against such a strong force such as war. This tone is implied by the idea that holy words such as 'prayers' and 'bells' are positioned next to 'mockeries'. Wilfred Owen use of figurative contributes to the main theme of the poem. The entrance startles the reader with the simile that the young people 'die as cattle'. With this phrase, Owen is implying that the war causes people to be treated as less than humans. This resembles Sassoon's idea of a loss of identity on the battlefield as the war has changed the soldiers. Both poets use comparison to funerals within the poems to show the little dignity the soldiers are given after their death in the war. Sassoon expresses that the sun is smouldered by 'drifting smoke that shroud' which brings connotations of death. This generates the idea of the body being covered at a funeral allowing the reader to sympathise for the soldiers as they did not receive the sending off that they deserved. In the same way, Owen makes many references to ceremonies including 'dawn of blinds' which would take place at a funeral. Similarly to Sassoon's idea, Owen is drawing a parallel to death at home and at war. By referring to the end of the service, we recognise that the families of the soldiers were not able to say a final goodbye to their loved ones. Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen both also use personification to build the atmosphere for the reader. Within 'Attack', Sassoon suggests that the 'tanks creep' which implies that within the busy battlefield they are to be careful and secretive. Owen uses the same technique to describe the 'monstrous anger of the guns' as they fire at the enemy. By personifying inanimate objects,