

Regeneration essay sample



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The First World War was looked upon as a heroic and courageous task to perform for your country. The young men of that era were influenced by propaganda to fight in the war as it portrayed true chivalry. These views were also opposed by many but expressed by similar means which were poetry and novel writing. Although these were the main forms of literary pieces there were those who wrote diaries and extracts. This essay will look at the views of the First World War poets in contrast to Pat Barker's *Regeneration*.

Regeneration is a war novel which looks at the harsh reality of the First World War as experienced by young men from the United Kingdom. Although Barker had no direct experience of the World War 1, her writing strongly shows her opposing view which is similar to Sassoon and Owen.

Regeneration is set in a mental hospital where a series of realistic and fictional characters are interwoven. Two of the main characters included Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, who were admitted into Craig Lockhart where Dr. Rivers treated them for the psychological injuries they both attained throughout the duration of the war.

Regeneration is a novel which looks at the psychological damage in which war has on the soldiers. Rivers diagnoses their illness to be war neuroses, when defined it means to have a mild mental disorder. The usual form of treatment for war neuroses would be the use of electric shocks and other similar tortures. At Craig Lockhart which was a hospital specialised for officers only, Rivers instead of torture greeted his patients with sympathy and interest. Rivers encouraged them to discuss their feelings. As a

psychiatrist Rivers knows how to deal with the different emotional and psychological problems in which the patients faced during the war.

Many of the poets which will be examined speak of the severe living conditions of the trenches, the injuries sustained by soldiers, but also the noble and courageousness of fighting in the war. When looking at Sassoon's view of the war in comparison to Barker it is evident that they both have an anti-war attitude. Sassoon fought in the war and is able to produce literature in the form of poetry which expresses and gives an in depth illustration of what it is like to be in a war and also how it affected him.

In Sassoon's poem "The Dug-Out" Sassoon seems extremely distressed by what is going on around him he opens the poem with a question "Why do you lie with your leg ungainly huddled, And one arm bent across your sullen cold, Exhausted face?" lines (1-3) At this point Sassoon seems as if he is asking the soldier why they are doing this to themselves, he describes the look on their faces and the posture of their bodies as they return from battle.

Sassoon communicates how it makes him feel to see the soldiers exhausted to the extent he attempts to shake them by the shoulders "And you wonder why I shake you by the shoulder Drowsy you mumble and sigh and turn your head

You are too young to fall asleep forever And when you sleep you remind me of the dead" (lines 5-8) This communicates to the reader that Sassoon although he was weak and exhausted he still tried to keep a positive attitude. Another soldier believes he has this attitude because he is young and full of life; this is evident through the last two lines of his poem. Despite

Sassoon's positive attitude reflected in this poem, he was a person who did not try to glamorise or glorify war or death but he gave an in depth description of what really went on during the war.

In Sassoon's poem "Dreamer" a graphic view of the living conditions which they had to bare was given. "I see them foul dug-out gnawed by rats And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain" (lines 9-10) This quote also gives an extremely graphic description of what happens to the bodies as they lay dead in the trenches. This reflects the absurd living conditions in which the soldiers had to face. Many of Sassoon's poetry focuses on the life which the soldiers used to live and he is constantly compares the life the soldiers had to the life they live now.

Dreaming of things they did with ball and bats" (line 11) Sassoon puts across the point in his poetry that the soldiers are all putting themselves to their death as they feel this showed courage and bravery, and they thought was the best method of proving their love for their Country. Wilfred Owen was another poet who had similar views to Barker and Sassoon. In the poem Dulce Et Decorum Est, Owen touches on the similar views to Barker, as they both looked at the psychological effects which the soldiers faced though out the war.

"Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! An ecstasy of fumbling Fitting the clumsy helmet just in time" (lines 9-10) These lines show that the soldiers are not mentally stable to be fighting. Their mental state of mind seems to be effected which was the point Owen tried to carry forward. The soldiers are young men who may not have exposed to this environment and the things they did see were

graphic as Owen describes. “ If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood Come gargling from the froth corrupted lungs Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues” (lines 21-24)

Owen was very much affected by the war which was why he was admitted to Craig Lockhart. The experience which he endured, tortured him as he spoke of in his poetry. “ In all my dreams, before my helpless sight He plunges at me guttering, choking, drowning” (line15-16) This shows that the images played over in his mind which eventually tormented and turned him psychologically mad Owen and Sassoon shared the same views and ideas, which they both put forward into heir writing. In Owens poem “ Anthem of Doomed Youth”. Owens opinion is already put forward before the poem actually begins.

The word doomed implies that the young men have no other way, meaning the war is the only option which the soldiers have. This also implies that the soldiers are doomed to their death. “ No mockeries now for them: no prayers or bells Nor any voice of mourning saves the chorus” These lines allow the reader to think that there is no hope for the soldiers. The words, the prayers could either make you think theirs no God which is why this is happening as praying is the only access to God or the fact that the soldiers are woken up from their sleep to go and fight this affects their mental state of mind.

Owen is a poet who tends to not focus on passing the blame onto those in charge, but his main focal point which he portrays through his poetry are the living conditions which he found appalling. This is most evident in his poem Dulce Et Decorum Est. The poets I will now be analysing are Rupert Brook

and Jessie Pope, who share a contrasting view as they see war as true chivalry and loyalty to their country. These poets, along with the young men of the First World War believe this act of war to be honourable and noble. In Brooke's sonnet "The Dead" he values the opportunity that the soldiers have to die for their country.

Blow out; you bugle over the rich dead" (line 1) The young men who have died are glorified because of their noble act. This poem as well as Brooke's other sonnets romanticises death and the act of war. "But dying, had made us rarer gifts than gold" In the quote Brooke gives the image that these soldiers are special gifts that's worth gold. This is the image the soldiers were given also, this kept them alert and attentive in hope that they will see the end of the war along with their loved ones, unfortunately many didn't live to see the next day. "Poured out the red

Sweet wine of youth" (5-6) This quote Romanticises death and makes it sound glamorous "Sweet wine of youth" gives the image that dying is a nice thing to do, death is now glorified despite the numerous amount of lives that were lost. Brooke in the poem "Peace" thanks God for the men who march in honour for their country, he thanks God for the war and for the time given. "Now God be thanked who matched us with his honour" (line 1) Brooke believed this war to be sent by God and he criticises those men who do not join to the army, he refers to them as 'Half men'.

Being in the war is a patriotic action which required the skills of men. In all of Brooke's poems, his view is extremely one sided, he fails to recognise the pain and suffering in which the soldiers endure while fighting and dying.

Pope along with Brooke shares the same views unlike Sassoon, Owen and Barker. Pope encourages and supports those taking part in her poem in her poem 'The Call'. Pope believes and has faith in all the men going to war and she also has faith that they will return unharmed. She puts across the image that the soldiers will be rewarded for their actions.

Who's going out to win? " (Line 5) This gives the soldiers the impression that they are heroic figures who will be rewarded. The issue of death was never mentioned and those who didn't sing up were known to be called cowards. The poem The Call on a whole gives the impression of watching a television advertisement or reading a propaganda poster. This poem glamorises the war and the poem makes you feel as if you are missing out if you didn't join in. The views of the First World War fall into two categories Anti and Pro. Barker who is a modern day novel writer, Sassoon and Owen are anti war poets.

Their work proves this greatly, their views do not waver or change when reading, and they are strong writers who have a passion for what they believe in. Pope and Brooke's poetry falls into the category of pro war. Their poetry praises war and like the anti war poets the pro war poets believe strongly in war and they take pride in their views. Barker who contradicts all the above mentioned poets as she focuses her novel on the psychological effects which the soldiers endure, the poets focus on the living conditions and torture endure but also the chivalric and heroic action in the First World War.