

# Who's for the game essay



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The experiences of men and women within the war differed drastically, due to the different roles played by each gender; women lacked knowledge of the trauma undergone by soldiers on the frontline, due to their lack of personal experience. However, there was not only contrast between men and women in their attitudes and view of the war: Depending on the nature of their involvement in the war, attitudes of women were many and varied, as were those of men. Written by Jessie Pope, a writer well-known for the propaganda portrayed by her poetry throughout the war, 'Who's for the Game?' harbours an extremely motivational, patriotic tone.

This is due to the fact that Pope was commissioned to write poems that would encourage young men to join up and fight for their country. As such, this poem illustrates Pope's utilisation of certain literary techniques in order to rouse an arguably ill-founded passion inside young men to fight to defend their country. Pope's use of rhetorical questions throughout this poem acts as a gripping device, and holds the attention of the reader; 'Who's for the game, the biggest that's played, The red, crashing game of a fight?' ... 'Who'll give his country a hand?' As well as demonstrating Pope's use of rhetorical questions and the patriotism within her poetry, this quote also illustrates her technique of comparing the brutal war to a sport's 'game', which is further supported by her statement; 'Who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid?' in which sport's terminology is utilised, in order to enable her target audience, the young men of the time, to relate to what is being said: Sport's games were popular amongst boys of the early Twentieth Century, and by comparing the war to a such a game, Pope appeals to these boys.

The above quote also demonstrates Pope's technique of challenging the masculinity of the young men, as she implies that those who don't fight are cowards, again this is further developed by the statement; 'Who would much rather come back on a crutch Than lie low and be out of the fun?' As she was ignorant of the brutality of the reality of war, Pope's idealisation of, and her naïve, patriotic approach to the war enraged many of those who were actively involved in the fighting. World War One poet, Wilfred Owen, particularly despised Pope for her habit of romanticising the aspects of war that she was ignorant of. He was in fact so passionate about his dislike for her that he directly addresses her, in 'Dulce et Decorum Est', when he states, 'If you could hear...the blood Come gargling from the froth corrupted lungs.

.. My friend, you would not tell with such high zest To children ardent for some desperate glory The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori'. Expressing a similar attitude to that of Pope, Marian Allen glorifies the war in her poem, 'The Wind on the Downs', in which she speaks of her inability to accept the death of a loved one.

In support of this subject matter, a disbelieving, longing tone is conveyed, with a sense of naivety also conveyed by Pope in 'Who's for the Game'. This naivety is present due to the lack of personal experience that these two writers have had of the brutal reality of the First World War. As Pope remained on the home front in order to write poetry for the newspapers, Allen was typical of many more women at the time of the war; she remained at home whilst her lover went to fight in the war, and consequently she had view of war that was such due to the propaganda portrayed by the media

and writers such as Pope. The repetition of this denial towards her loss reinforces this point; 'You have not died, it is not true.

.. That you are round about me, I believe...How should you leave me, having loved me so?.

.. It seemed impossible that you should die'. That we're introduced to the concept of his death through her line, 'Because they tell me, dear, that you are dead,' carries with it an air of denial, due to her expression that she was told, and not that she actually believes it herself.

The line would be much less effective had it said 'Because you are dead'. Allen's idealisation of her lover and his life in, and out of the war, may be due to the manner in which she received the news of his death, and how little of the truth she was told. This is a subject directly addressed by Siegfried Sassoon in 'The Hero', as he speaks of the 'gallant lies' an officer had delivered to the mother of a soldier who had actually died a horrific death. It is portrayed by Allen that her and her lover 'thought of many things and spoke of few' when he returned home on leave, thereby conveying that he found it difficult to speak of the truth to her. This seeming feeling of not being able to confide in anyone on the home front was common amongst soldiers in the First World War. R.

C Sherriff demonstrates it in his play 'Journey's End' through Stanhope's reluctance to take leave, and Susan Hill illustrates it through Hilliard's emotional isolation from his family in 'Strange Meeting', as he cannot even speak to his sister of the 'nightmares' he encounters whilst at home on leave. Had Allen known the honest nature of her lover's death, and life at

war, she may have expressed a different view through this poem. Vera Brittain did gain an insight into the reality of what life must have been like for the men at war, through receiving her dead fiancé's uniform via post. The refined view she adopted of the war was aided by the condition of the uniform; 'damp and worn and simply caked with mud', exhibiting the 'hole' made by the bullet that killed him. These quotes are taken from Extract C, an extract from 'Letters from a Lost Generation'.

In this particular letter, Brittain is writing to her brother about the terrible ordeal of examining the uniform, an experience that proved to be somewhat revelatory for Brittain, as it was this following the loss of her fiancé that spurred her to join up and become a V. A. D. Brittain composed this letter in 1916, which was a pivotal year within the war; a year in which many attitudes of those who previously supported the war were manipulated by its seeming newfound futility. Owen expresses in 'Futility', 'Was it for this the clay grew tall?' which strongly conveys his view that the war became superfluous, and that the Earth did not develop to be destroyed in such a brutal, futile way.

Siegfried Sassoon also made a famous declaration stating his opposition to the continuation of the War in 1917, as a result of events in 1916, such as the infamous 'Battle of the Somme'. This declaration, and therefore Sassoon's change of view towards the war is a component of Pat Barker's 'Regeneration'. Related postgame of thingsThe form of a letter allows Brittain to utilise several literary techniques, such as varying sentence lengths and use of the five senses to create impact. Effective examples of blunt sentences used by Brittain are, 'It was terrible' And 'No, they were not him'.

These two statements demonstrate how Brittain made use of short sentences in order to reflect the blunt, direct nature in which her realisation of the reality of war hit her. In contrast to these short sentences, Brittain displays many complex sentences in order to convey a vivid image of the scene of the uniform before her; 'The mud of France which covered them was not ordinary mud; it had not the usual clean, pure smell of earth, but it was as though it were saturated with dead bodies- dead that had been dead a long, long time.' This sentence illustrates Brittain's use of powerful adjectives, such as 'saturated', to strengthen her intended effect, and her application of the repetition of 'long', and 'dead', in order to emphasise certain factors of what she is conveying. Varying sentence lengths is not a facet of either Allen's 'The Wind on the Downs' or Pope's 'Who's for the Game'. This is due to these extracts taking the forms of poems, which makes it difficult for such a technique to be applied.

However, Pope manages to exploit her chosen form of a poem in order to aid her purpose. She imposes a strong marching rhythm, which is supported by the typical ABAB rhyme scheme, thereby giving her poem a sense of soldiers marching to war, which can be perceived by the young men reading it.

Similarly, Allen makes use of a regular rhyme scheme in order to give her poem fluidity and enhance the idealised depiction of death, which inevitably highlights Allen's ignorance to the truth of conditions at war. Pope employs simple language and colloquialisms in her poem, due to its form and audience: As it appeared in a national newspaper, the audience was broad, and so the use of simple language meant the poem would appeal to everyone.

The colloquialisms, such as 'lie low'...give his country a hand' illustrate Pope's ability to relate to her intended audience, as boys of the time would find this language common and therefore easy to relate to. The patriotism conveyed by Pope is also illustrated through the latter of the two colloquialisms above.

This patriotic attitude was shared by Rupert Brooke, as is conveyed through his poem, 'The Soldier' when he writes; 'A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware, Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam' Brooke died of dysentery before carrying out any active service in the war, and therefore, he too was ignorant of the true conditions of life in the trenches. Thus, his poetry often illustrated naivety and patriotism, similar to others, like Pope and Allen, who were ignorant of the brutal reality of war. Through comparing these three texts we can consequently deduce that although one would assume women to have adopted a romantic view towards the act of fighting for one's country due to their lack of active involvement in the war, there were actually a range of views produced amongst women as a result of the first world war, expressed through their various pieces of literature.