

In what ways do the poems 'flag', 'out of the blue' and 'mametz wood' convey the ...

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In what ways do the poems 'Flag', 'Out of the Blue' and 'Mametz Wood' convey the emotions and images of conflict? 'Flag' considers the value of patriotism as symbolized by the flag, and explores ideas of national identity, with a running metaphor comparing to a flag. It considers how the flag is used and exploited, this creates sympathy, and the refrain explains subtly that the flag is 'just a piece of cloth'. In each of the first four stanzas a question and answer is given which both asserts and challenges the power and value of the flag telling the reader, it can control countries; it can motivate men; it can change the minds of cowards; it can live forever. This shows a high level of power and in a way shows hidden personification as its capabilities (excluding the final point) are of some intelligence that would only seem human. In the final stanza the person asks how he can possess such a powerful item, and the answer to the earlier questions is revealed, with having possession of the flag can have terrible consequences. He addresses the reader directly: 'the blood you bleed'. He follows this in the final stanza, by revealing what the 'piece of cloth' is, but also revealing the consequences of taking the flag, losing your independence, the freedom to make your own decisions and, it is implied, your morality. This only makes the reader more curious. 'Out of the Blue' shows how, in the modern world, conflict isn't confined to a battlefield, and terrorism intrudes on everyone's life, as throughout it shows imagery of an anonymous account. The poem establishes the speaker's 'master of the universe' character, a financier looking down from his office, but he is trapped in the burning building, giving of feelings of despair and horror. Armitage imagines a character from TV footage on 9/11, and invites the reader, who is already a witness to this

event, to also see it from the personal point of view of a victim; this only draws more sorrow along with the sense of resignation from the speaker. The dynamic of the poem, with the persistent address to 'you' and its question 'Are your eyes believing', implicates the reader in this man's fate and also questions our everyday lives; replicating feeling of guilt, and imagery of helpless death. 'Mametz Wood' shows a modern perspective on a conflict haunting almost a century after its time. Sheers makes his view clear in the opening stanza, calling the soldiers 'the wasted young', and shows the brutality of war not through the horror of combat, but as the earth gives up the broken bodies. The central images of death are shocking and horrific, in the unnatural angle of their eyeless skulls and their missing jaws, evoking sadness and anger. Sheers develops an image of the land being wounded and in need of healing, suggesting war is a crime against nature and the earth suffers. Later the earth is personified as a sentinel watching and reminding of what once happened. Although the fighting is briefly alluded to in Stanza 3, the poem then shifts to the present tense, implying the consequences echo down the years. It also gives imagery of an archaeological dig, which is a running theme throughout the poem along with death and aching silence.