

What does the war poet, wilfred owen, have to say about world war one essay sampl...

[Profession](#), [Poet](#)



The poet Wilfred Owen enlisted as a soldier in World War One in 1917. While in treatment for shellshock, Owen was encouraged by his doctor to translate his experiences, specifically those he relived in his dreams, into poetry. For this reason Owen's poems are an insight into the mind of a soldier fighting in the Great War. Many of his poems were published posthumously, making them especially personal. The poem "Exposure" is about the winter of 1917. It describes Owen's experiences in the trenches of France.

He portrays the bleakness of the war and psychological effects that soldiers endured while waiting for the beginning of an enemy offensive; something that has often been overshadowed by poems describing gunfire and bombings. The poem begins by giving the reader a personalized view of the setting: "Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us..." The poet has used a simile to compare the icy winds to a knife, saying that the wind itself is painful, but also that the soldiers' brains are aching, already showing the psychological effects on the soldiers.

The phrase "Our brains ache" shows the literary influence that Keats had on Owen. Keats began one of his romantic poems with the phrase "My heart aches", which may be Owen's way of saying that the romanticists of the past could not imagine the pain and war that he is experiencing. In the fourth line Owen rapidly lists adjectives which create an anticlimax when paired with the next line: "Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous, But nothing happens." The poet is showing that much of the Great War was spent waiting for an attack, while the soldiers had to live with unending fear and worry.

In stanza two Wilfred Owen continues his description of the weather and its effect on the men: " Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire like twitching agonies of men among its brambles. " This is possibly Owen personifying the weather to show that war is all around them, but cannot be controlled. He could be making a statement that soldiers control neither the weather nor the war, but God does. Their lives, like the weather, are in the hands of God, who will ultimately decide whether they live or die.

The fourth stanza is one which effectively shows the poet's use of alliteration and rhyme. The alliteration seems to emphasise the occasional changing of pace on the front line: " Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence" to " flowing flakes that flock". He effectively manages to make the alliteration mimic the movement of his descriptions, making the bullets move faster in our minds, and the snowflakes much gentler and peaceful. This could also be his way of saying that natural things, like snowflakes, are good and peaceful, whereas war and bullets are wrong and unnatural.

Half-rhyme is also used to emphasise the silence and lurking of something sinister. He rhymes the words " silence" and " nonchalance", as well as " snow" and " renew". This plays on the ever-present theme of silence, which is usually something tranquil, but in war causes nervousness. The seventh stanza is particularly compelling. It alludes the soldiers to Christ-like figures: " Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born, For love of God seems dying. " Owen is making the statement that the soldiers are sacrificing themselves for those at home in England.

The poem is structured into eight verses, the emphasis of each falls upon the last line, which is always indented. The last line " But nothing happens" is repeated four times, to enhance the constant expectation of battle. It also symbolises how the soldiers have ended in the same as the beginning of the poem: waiting nervously for an attack. " The Send-Off" is another poem by Wilfred Owen, fully completed in 1918, not long before his death. It describes the young men leaving England and going to war.

The setting is much safer, but beneath the veneer presented there is an approaching danger. It was written at Ripon, in a large army camp, where the troops in the poem have just returned from a sending-off ceremony. The poem begins with an immediately sinister atmosphere. This instantly sets the tone of the poem, an example of which is the first three lines: " Down the close darkening lanes they sang their way To the siding-shed, And lined the train with faces grimly gay. " The choice of adjective such as " close" and " darkening" creates a claustrophobic feeling.

Owen may be doing this to reflect how he believes that soldiers must appear excited and eager to leave for battle, while inside they are apprehensive. This is enhanced by the alliterated phrase " grimly gay", which are two conflicting emotions. The second stanza describes the flowers stuck on the soldiers' uniforms: " Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and spray As men's are, dead. " Traditionally flowers have a significance of being coloured for celebrations and white for mourning. The women have given them these flowers both to support and encourage them, but also to garland them for their death.

Throughout the poem there are portrayals of the truth of the send-off being unspoken. Everyone knows that most of the men will not return, but nobody is speaking about it. This is shown in the lines: " Then, unmoved, signals nodded, and a lamp Winked to the guard. " Wilfred Owen is making a statement about the war throughout the poem. He is disapproving of the highly-elaborate send-off ceremonies, which with their pomp and ceremony are obstructing the flow of communication and emotion. He believes that the public should speak more openly, instead of stifling their displays of feelings.

The poem also contains other opinions about the First World War. In the final two verses the poet makes two points about the soldiers. The first is that many men will not return, destined to die in the war, as shown in the line: " A few, a few, too few for drums and yells". The repetition of the word ' few' emphasises the tragedy that is the loss of such young life. He is also saying that when they return there will no longer be ceremonies and celebrations, as the reality will be inescapable. The final stanza tells of how the war will change those who survive.

The lines read: " May creep back, silent, to still village wells Up half-known roads. " Wilfred Owen is saying that when the men return they may have changed so drastically that their homes will not feel like homes anymore. " The Send-Off" is structured very simply. Alternating verses of three and two lines emphasise Owen's strong opinion on this topic. The simple rhyming pattern also does this, as well as giving the poem a steady pace, which echoes the marching of the soldiers during the send-off ceremony.

Overall, Wilfred Owen has many things to say about the First World War, which he expresses through his poetry. In these poems he says how the war will change the soldiers, and many will not return. He also tries to portray the side of trench warfare that was not shown often, the endless waiting around for an attack and its effect on the soldiers' psyche. In conclusion, I personally found that Owen's poems make one thing about these war issues more in depth, evoking varied and at times conflicting emotions.