

# How is the poetry of 1914 different from earlier war poetry essay sample

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The Traditional Poems written before the first world war in 1914 were about Heroism and the war being glorious, the men were persuaded to join the army and were told that it was good to fight for your country. The war was thought to be exciting glamorous and the soldiers were heroes, the war was thought to be romantic and the women loved men in uniforms. World war I Poetry was different from earlier poetry as Owen was telling his own experience that war isn't Heroic or glamorous. The Soldier Rupert Brooke 1887-1915, If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign Field That is for ever England .

There shall be In that rich earth a richer dust concealed; A dust whom England bore, Shaped, made aware, Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam, A body's of England's breathing English air, Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home. The soldier Rupert Brooke was saying that if he dies in a field he wants to be remembered as a hero. Peace Rupert Brooke 1881-1915, Now God be thanked who has matched us with his honour, And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping. He's thanking god for waking him from his sleep and telling them what they have to do go and fight for their country. *Dolce Et Decorum Est*.

*Dolce Et Decorum Est* describes the struggle of a group of people who have to struggle through the most extraordinary events day in day out, the poem is told from the first person point of view talking from his own experience. *Dolce et Decorum Est* means it is sweet and Honourable to die for ones country. If the reader is reading the poem for the first time they will learn the meaning of the title before reading the poem they may feel its a

poem that represents the army in a good way. After reading the poem I think that Owen named the poem this way because of the strong statement that he makes in the poem.

The old lie: *Dolce et Decorum est*. He's not happy with this because of the experience he has had. The soldiers are weighed down by all the things they are carrying, perhaps they are even weighed down by the expectation of their country and the memories of death and suffering they have witnessed. Owen says "Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs" The soldiers are exhausted. They are so tired that even when the flares go off behind them they don't have the energy or even feel like turning around to see them. Owen describes the soldiers as being "Drunk with fatigue". This does not sound very glamorous or romantic.

Owen is saying that the soldiers are so tired that it is as though they are drunk. Owen is trying to say that the soldiers are behaving as though they don't know entirely what they are doing. They are just being led along like zombies because they have had such a terrible experience on the battle field. In the first stanza of the poem, the soldiers are compared to old women and beggars which is saying what the soldiers look like after the battle. They are limping and have shot wounds. This is not what they were expecting when they joined up. They thought they would be proud and smart soldiers.

The word 'you' has quite an effect on the reader because it makes the reader imagine what it was like for Owen. The tone of the final stanza is quite argumentative because Owen is talking to the reader, the people telling the

children to join the army. They are filling the children's heads with "lies" and a If they knew the truth they wouldn't want the children to join as there's no glory and no romance in dying for your country, only suffering and horror. The pace of the poem quickens in the 2nd stanza. The soldiers are awoken by a gas attack. This effectively shatters the mood that Owen has created in the opening stanza .

The soldiers are now awoken by the fact that their lives are in extreme danger and they now have to be fully aware of all their surroundings. The words "Flumbling", "Stumbling", "Flound'ring" and "Drowning" show that they are panicking. Owen says "Dim through the misty panes and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him drowning". The green light Owen talks of is the sight through their gas masks. Owen uses a simile saying that the man is drowning in a green sea. The reality of this is that the man is drowning in a sea of gas but inside his body he is choking on a sea of his own toxic blood.

Owen tells us how this memory has stayed with him. The Sickening sight of a man plunging at him. "In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. Owen seems to have a great fear of the gas attacks when he talks of them. Owen talks of all the nightmares he has had because of the war and this event in particular Owen says "In all my dreams before my helpless sight he plunges at me". He describes how the man was taken away and the narrator Owen walked behind and saw his face. Owen is still haunted by the nightmare of his "hanging face like a devil's sick of sin".

The dead bodies are treated like meat as there are so many deaths it becomes like a routine thing. He sees the horror as he is standing behind the man who has been gassed to death. This is what he writes: " My friend, you would not tell with such high zest to children ardent for some desperate glory the old lie. " Owen is saying that if you could see the things he had seen then you would not believe the lie or want young children to be persuaded by this lie. By saying this he is expressing the bitterness he has naturally for the army but the situation as a whole. Owen adds more examples of this throughout the last stanza.

Owen's main question to the reader in the last stanza is before going into the army think carefully of what you are doing as you will see something in great contrast to what you may have imagined. It will be like hell. The poem is describing a terrible shocking death by gas, how can it be sweet and honourable to die like this? This is the country that sold him the old lie and he was deceived by those who told him. " *Dolce et Decorum est pro patria mori.* " In " Disabled " Owen is describing someone that he knew in the army . This man was in the Scottish regiment. He has had his legs blown off. He has no legs and his arm is " Sewn at the elbow " .

He is in an institute, a nursing home. He waits for dark because then things will be quiet and he can hide in the darkness he is disillusioned with life and is waiting to die . He hears voices of the boys singing, these are voices of children playing just as he had once played. Perhaps they are playing at war acting out what it would be like if they went to war when they grow up. He remembers that at his time the town's atmosphere was fun and happy

everyone is dancing having fun. He is very sad that he will never again experience this. He says the girls look upon him like he has some kind of "queer disease".

He talks of how he will never again feel the waist of a woman, he also talks about how he "threw away his knees" in the war. He went off to fight in the war at a young age, he didn't realise what would happen he's a victim of the old lie. He even lied about his age so that they would let him fight. He has lost his colour losing so much blood "And a leap of purple spouted from his thigh". He feels as though he had "poured his life down endless shell holes", he wonders what he has been given for this nothing. He loved his youth but when his legs were blown away a massive part of him was lost and now he is missing the way he used to enjoy life.

One time he saw blood down his leg from a football injury, he thought this was great. He felt like a hero. He was treated like a hero. Now he has no legs and no one treats him like a hero. He does not feel like a hero. He wonders why he joined the army. He tried to impress people as they told him he would do well in the army and look like a god one reason he signed up was because his dear Meg would be pleased. At this time he was not afraid of being afraid. A soldier's biggest worry is being afraid. Owen says "And no fears of fear have come yet". He did not know there was anything to be afraid of.

He had thoughts of all the swords and other weapons that he would receive in the army. He had great thoughts of wearing a smart uniform and making

those proud salutes . So smiling away they signed him up even though he was not really old enough to fight. He said that before he never even thought of the Germans and he definitely had nothing against them. So he only went to the war because of the glory and romantic ideas he had about war. He thought that playing football was great , the buzz he got from the cheering. People thought of him as a hero.

He thought that people would cheer for him in the army, he wanted to be a hero in the army. He thinks of the army spirit, the pride in his unit . He tells us about how he was given cheers and the noise of the drums as he leaves . He is so very optimistic. When he is brought back the cheers were not like the ones before the cheers are in contrast to what he imagined. This is ironic to him. Because only a few people cheered when he came back. Only one man inquired this man was the priest . This makes him feel in a way betrayed. He will spend the next few years doing as the rules say . People will just take pity on him.

He talks of how the women ignore him for the strong people with all their body in one piece. His final thoughts of the poem is one of the total depression. He thinks that life is pointless. He is so helpless he can't go to bed without someone there to help him . He feels as though he only has a few years left. He wants to be put to sleep as he feels like he has and can do nothing that he feels will make his life tolerable and he feels as though nothing that he does or feels will make him feel his life is worth it. As you can see from both poems they are very powerful. Each of the two poems makes a statement .

One difference between the poems is that "Dolce et Decorum est" is a view on the terrible suffering and horrible ways in which men died whereas Disabled is a description of the turmoil of one person's survival. One thing that I feel both poems have in common is that they talk about how the men were lied to and how they were sold a lie. This is more true in "Dolce et Decorum est". If a person wanted an example of what army life was like for a platoon at its worst I would show them "Dolce et Decorum". However if I was asked about a poem that describes how the affected people, who survived I would tell them to read "Disabled".

This is in my opinion the most moving of the stories as it represents a man's struggle for his life. This man can offer nothing to his country now. He can't even offer himself something that he feels will make his staying alive worth it. While some of the soldiers in "Dolce et" survived the gas attack this man's soul has in effect died. He has lost his colour and can't get used to the fact of being untouchable. I find "Dolce et Decorum" to be the most powerful of the two poems. My reasons are as follows. Although "Disabled" is very good, very powerful poem in its own right it only describes the view of one person in the army.

I think that what makes "Dolce et" so powerful is that Owen speaks for the masses in the army when he talks of the daily horrifying sights and regular attempts by the Germans to gas them. Reading these poems can enlighten a person. Many people say that they live stressful lives and are under extreme pressure. If you think of what these young men have gone through it can put a lot of things into perspective. Day in day out these men had to have the



weight of a nation on their shoulders this is before they have to dodge land mines and gas attacks.