

Wilfred owen

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Wilfred Owen is able to emphatically depict the devastation of World War One as the greatest human tragedy of the twentieth century. Owen, through his poems was able to effortlessly prompt deep emotion in the reader through his individual style and his use of eloquent themes. In the poems 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'The Send Off' Owen reinforces the main theme of the tragedy of war.

Owen achieves this by the utilization of techniques that recreate the potent and disturbing scenes of the arena of battle. Owen, writing as a primary source, witnessed the deadly battles and had experienced the true destruction of war. As a result of this, his poetry is most remarkable as he writes with an honesty that other poets could not achieve. The use of powerful imagery and language, similes, rhyme, alliteration and personification assist in making Owen's poetry truly outstanding and poignant, as a direct result of the horrors and realism that came from an extremely shocking event, World War One.

Wilfred Owen expressed his poetry as a means of presenting a protest and exposing the true brutality and realism of war. This theme is ever-present in the poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' Owen is able to influence and persuade the reader that war is a great human tragedy and should never be looked upon as glorified lie, as the title and last lines indicate, *dulce et decorum est Pro Patria Mori*, It is a sweet and fitting thing to die for one's native land. At the beginning of the poem we are immediately introduced to the soldiers as they are described to be 'Bent double, like old beggars' and 'coughing hags'.

Owen's use of harsh words and similes creates strong and forceful imagery in our minds. The soldiers are really young men but Owen compares their appearance to that of old women and beggars. The reader is made to empathize with the soldiers as 'Many had lost their boots, but limped on', 'drunk with fatigue'. These simple words reveal the ultimate suffering that the soldiers had to endure but they are able to draw the reader's attention and incite meaningful thought.

Owen continually alters his tone throughout the poem as in the second stanza the shocking nature of war is reinforced again by the changing situation. 'Gas! , Gas! Quick Boys! ' The reader is made to fear for the soldiers, as the anxiety and alarm of the situation is shown through the use and arrangement of the capital letters and the forcefulness of the line. The repeated word, 'Gas! ' helps to represent the urgency of the situation.

Owen's poetry adjusts from thought provoking to tragedy as a soldier is 'stumbling' to find a gas mask to protect himself.

Owen again employs the use of brilliant imagery as the man appears to be 'guttering, choking, drowning' 'as 'under a green sea'. The reader is made to feel shocked and appalled by the strong language Owen employs the and images created, 'gargling from the froth corrupted lungs', 'watch the white eyes writhing in his face', the alliteration of the letter 'w' helps in adding to the imagery, making the scene even more sickening and gruesome. These few lines force the reader to become deeply affected by Owen's illustration of the battle and help extend the awareness that war is futile.

Owen's writing style throughout the poem is remarkable because it is incredibly direct in its description and one can comprehend accurately what Owen is saying. Owen uses ideas and themes like 'old hags' to bring a visual nature to the poem. Owen is not only being descriptive but writes to reveal every part of the scene. He writes as if the situation is occurring right then, drawing the reader into the scene. Owen's ability to place the reader in the scene of the battlefield not only with his visual description but with the usage of phrasing that is both direct and associative makes the poem incredible.

He also relates the theme of fatigue with drunkenness, something that people experience and are able to associate with how the soldiers would have been feeling. Owen draws the reader into the language by using colloquial terms that make reference to common experiences, which allow the reader to comprehend in a simplistic method which helps explain the brutality of war and brings a familiarity and directness to his technique. In the poem 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' Owen criticizes the people who support the war and who are unaware of its true destruction.

This powerful theme was also apparent in 'Dulce et Decorum Est' as both poems contain similar themes and techniques and question the true sacrifice of young lives. The title of the poem is very poignant and indicates the meaning of the poem, of the doomed future that the young soldiers who go to war will face. At the beginning of the poem Owen imposes a powerful rhetorical question upon the reader 'What passing bells for these who die as

cattle? ' The question is a very challenging portraying the men as cattle being led away to be slaughtered, no one is even there to say goodbye.

This line stimulates pity in the reader, setting the tone for the first stanza which is one of protest and anger. Both 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' deal with the death and anguish of young, innocent soldiers and use powerful similes describing the men as something that they should not be like. Both poems distinguish the cruelty of war and the awareness of the sacrifice of lives, 'What candles may speed them all' and 'As under a green sea, I saw him drowning'.

Owen utilizes alliteration and personification to reinforce the amazing imagery and poignant message that he is able to create, 'Only the monstrous anger of guns, Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle, can patter out their hasty orisons. The two poems are able to strike a cord in the reader on an emotional level, reiterating the lasting impression of death and the loss of life that only comes from war. 'The Send Off' imparts a potent message of the lack of apathy towards soldiers leaving for war.

'The Send Off' contrasts expressly to that of 'Dulce et Decorum Est' as it is not set on the battlefield of war but depicts the process of soldiers who are being sent away to fight. Owen is still able to create a tragic mood throughout the poem and makes it clear that the soldiers are being sent away part way through the war as they are departing secretly and quietly 'like wrongs hushed up'. As the soldiers make their way through 'darkening lanes' to the awaiting trains the atmosphere of the poem is one of grief and shame.

Owen describes the soldiers' faces as 'grimly gay', which reinforces the fact that the soldiers know the fact that their fate has already been chosen. 'Dull porters watched them' indicates again that the soldiers were being secretly sent away, there were no families or friends there to see them off. The reader is forced to feel frustrated by the theme of the poem as it stirs up the emotion that these men are being sent away to die and not being treated like true human beings.

Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and spray', the colour white is associated with mourning and in this line Owen once again emphasizes the aspect of death. Owen's use of rhyme and half-rhyme throughout not only the 'The Send Off' but also 'Dulce et Decorum Est' links the composition and meaning of the poems together. Owen uses the convincing argument of the futility of war as the main basis of the poems and it is through this that Owen questions the reason behind the Great War and the authorities who support it.

Owen reveals the worthlessness of war but he does this through the use of strong imagery and comparisons and in the process force the reader to question the true reasons behind war. Wilfred Owen accepted the tragic situation of World War One and expressed the true realism and cruelty of war through his thought provoking poetry. In 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'The Send Off', Owen was able to create magnificent imagery that not only forces the reader to empathize with the poems and their characters but also to persuade the reader that war is tragic, unnecessary and should never be glorified.

Owen's poetry is remarkable because he is able to associate the greatest tragedy of the 20th century with the reader, we hear, feel and see the poems; Owen has the ability to take these events and not just describe them to the reader, but shows the shocking brutality and devastating effects of war. His poetry influences, and leaves a lasting and memorable notion in the mind and this makes his poetry truly remarkable.