

Sample literature review on explicate the poem: dulce et decorum est

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Wilfred Owen, the poet who poured his heart out in the lines of the war-poem, *Dulce et Decorum Est*, was himself a soldier who faced the harrowing experiences of war and was left with an everlasting scar on his mind. He could never get over the trauma and tragedy of warfare and his poems are among the most emphatic piece of literary works which denounce warfare and exemplify the brutalities of violence and the ultimate futility which leads to irreplaceable loss of lives and psychological strain. The poem is a first-hand account of the mental effect of war on the mind of the soldiers and the unimaginable massacre which compliments warfare. It is an outcry against such savagery which mankind brings upon the race owing to the petty worldly issues which have no significance in the context of life.

The poem is a stirring account of the speaker's personal experience at the battlefield. The poem starts with the vivid description of how the exertion of war has taken a toll on the young soldiers who have once marched onto the battlefield with the dream of fighting for glory and for their nation even amidst the worst consequences. The speaker expresses the plight of the soldiers in the poem writing,

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,

Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,

Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs

And towards our distant rest began to trudge. (1-4)

The reality of war, the violence and the colossal massacre seems to have made these soldiers exhausted and traumatized. The speaker writes, " Many had lost their boots / But limped on, blood-shod." (5-6)

The speaker builds up the image of the place where the hapless soldiers

were in. The periodic sound of shells, the flares and the dreadful place in itself signifies hell where no man gets any respite and is made to face severe punishment. These young lives were dragging themselves to the camp in the hope to be safe after the onerous day. However, they were hoping against hope as the ' enemy' soon bombarded the place with poisonous gas to exterminate the soldiers. The speaker writes to bring out the frenzied state of mind, " GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!" (9) In a state of frenzy, the soldiers reach out for their gas masks for saving their lives. But, one fails to put it on in time and perishes in the hellish toxin. It is a painful death which leaves the poet stirred.

Through the description of one painful event of the war, the speaker is actually endeavoring to bring forth to one and all the holistic trauma and terror of warfare. He was himself disillusioned by the real experience of the field of action and calls upon his fellow human beings to comprehend how war is not glorious. It is, in fact, a devilish act which strips mothers of their sons, wives of their husbands, children of their fathers. Raging warfare cannot be the solution to any worldly issue as it would only bring destruction and scar on the history of humanity. The speaker describes how the scene of his companion's death haunts him all his life. He writes of " His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin" to describe his horror. (20) He fails to get the memory out of his head or even at a dark corner of his mind. His poetry resonates which the traumatic outcry of the soldiers who were simply butchered by the cruelty of war. His tone is melancholy and he focuses on the ill-effects of war on the human mind. Worst of all is the fact that the speaker could not do anything but see fellow soldier meet his inevitable

demise in the middle of the battlefield. The poet is haunted by the bloodbath and pines for peace. The speaker wonders how the people back in England can actually feel war is a path to finding personal glory and urge upon the youth to join the army and fight in the name of nationalism. His documentation of reality through his literary pursuits bursts the bubble of concocted glory and pride which is built round war. He wishes that the commoners should know of the physical and mental trauma which the soldiers get exposed to in the battle and thus rethink about their erroneous opinion about such savagery. War is nothing but “ Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud” to the speaker. (23) Death under such unimaginable circumstances cannot be honorable, but painful and pathetic.

The avid reader can understand what sort of horrific experience must have transformed these young bold soldiers to feel like old hags. The poet is appalled by the occurrence of such violence which he feels is extremely futile. The poet’s personal experience of raging war was something which transformed him as a person and brought him closer to the reality of life. Thousands of lives are lost at the behest of the governments who settle their political and economic issues through the show of power and engaging in violent warfare. Warfare is an expression of the innate nature of the human race to be violent in its way to settle issues. This is nothing but an expression of the animalistic nature of man. The authorities or the nations whom the soldiers represent can never compensate the loss of lives and hence it portrays war as a glorious way to the heaven. However, it is the young lads of the nations who lose their lives at a tender age in a bid to fight for their country and earn the paramount honor which is nothing but a provocation by

the authorities to pursue these men into joining the army and fight. Wilfred Owen urges one and all to join the outcry to end such acts of colossal massacre and appeals to his readers to understand the harsh reality of war. The poem is one of the most famous literary works in the history of English literature which delves deep into the complications and repercussions which are associated with warfare and how the wars are wrongly perceived by the people who do not go and fight on the battlefield. The poet tries to address these two notions keeping them in juxtaposition in this poem and thus establishing the futility of wars which do no good to mankind in the long run. The poem mourns of the untimely end of human lives and the indifference to the pain of the soldiers. The poem is an exploration into the dark world of death and haplessness and hopes to see a world which is devoid of violence.

Works Cited

Owen, Wilfred. Dulce et Decorum Est. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

< <http://www.english.emory.edu/LostPoets/Dulce.html> >