

Soldier poet essay term paper example

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Poetry gives writers a voice to express their innermost feelings. I read once someone that one of the most difficult things that veterans face returning home is a lack of shared references points to relate their experience with those who were not there. Everyone knows war from books and movies, but it is another thing to be on the front lines fighting first hand. World War I in particular was gruesome, since much of the combat was fought in close proximity and many soldiers wallowed away in disease, pain and discomfort in trenches.

Reading poetry from the soldier poet one gets the sense that there is something saving about the written verses. Poetry can be cathartic, and it can also convey a sense of place and time in a realer sense than the dryness of a historical account.

Whether it is a history book, a first hand account or a poem about war, poetry cannot paint the full picture of the war and what it meant to those there—only the ones present can truly know this. But what it can do, is give us another window into viewing the past that gives us something the other windows of viewing do not. Take for example Jesse Pope's "The Call" which as a series of questions regarding support for the war. These were surely questions that many soldiers grappled with—did they really support the cause or were they doing this out of a sense of obligation. He writes, "Who's for the trench— Are you my laddie? / Who'll follow the French— /. Will you, my laddie?" What follows is a series of rhetorical questions in which the speaker seems to question the whole cause, something it is easy to assume was common amongst the ranks.

NPR wrote that "Soldiers like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, John McCrae

and Rupert Brooke wrote evocative poems about their experiences.”

Evocative likely because of what those experiences consisted of. One of the poems mentioned by Robert Brooke is a powerful verse that brings his homeland, what he was fighting for, home with him. If he dies he says, he hopes that his body will become for wherever he falls part of the England he left behind. The two final lines are particularly stirring, “ And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness, In hearts at peace, under an English heaven”

References:

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