

War in "the charge of
the light brigade",
"dulce et decorum
est" and "after
blen...

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



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

War in “ The Charge of the Light Brigade”, “ Dulce et Decorum Est” and “ After Blenheim” Essay Sample

For this piece of coursework I will be comparing each of the poems mentioned above to each other and commenting on the way they present war and how it reflects the poet's views on war.

Charge of the Light Brigade

The story of the poem is about six hundred soldiers who were given the wrong orders by their commanders and were sent to their death because of someone else's mistake. They had been ordered to charge the wrong valley which lead straight into the enemy's guns.

In the first stanza when the soldiers are given their orders they don't question them even though they know that they are wrong, “ not to make reply... not to reason why”. We are told that they know the commands are wrong when we read “ someone had blunder'd”.

In stanza two the soldiers are riding into the cannons that are on all sides of them, “ cannon to right of them... cannon to left of them... cannon in front of them.” Even though they are getting shot down they continue riding on into the enemy army because that's how disciplined they are.

In stanza three the soldiers begin their attack against the enemy with their “ sabres bare”. They attack their “ Cossack and Russian” enemy after riding through the “ battery smoke” of the cannons. After this initial attack the

Light Brigade retreats but “ not the six hundred” as many had already been killed.

As they retreated they had to go back through the cannons that were once again all around them, “ cannon to right of them... cannon to left of them... cannon in front of them.” This was as they were riding “ back from the mouth of hell” but on the way back even more of the six hundred were killed.

The world then is amazed at the courage of these soldiers as they fought as best they could even though they knew they had been given wrong orders. The soldiers will live on in the world’ memory and will honour the soldiers glory forever.

Form

The poem is a narrative that is told in chronological order from the beginning of the battle when the soldiers are given orders to when the soldiers return from battle. The structure, rhyme and rhythm all add to how the story is told.

This poem is set into six stanzas each of different length. The longer the stanza the more action is described. The longest two stanzas are the battle itself where the most action is described and the shorter stanzas tell us of the soldiers travelling to and from the battle. The shortest stanza is outside of the battle completely and is the poet’s view of what happened.

The rhythm helps the reader of the poem to visualise what is happening in the story. The first lines, “ Half a league, half a league...Half a league onwards” sound like horses’ hooves.

The poem doesn't have a fixed rhyme scheme, but Tennyson uses rhyme in the more critical places of the poem to get his point across that the soldiers wouldn't give up even though they knew they were going to die, "Flash'd all their sabres bare... Flash'd as they turn in air... Sabring the gunners there." He uses these triple rhymes three times throughout the poem to help emphasize his point. The only stanza that he uses a fixed rhyme scheme is in the last stanza, which is possibly the most important stanza where he is getting his view across.

He uses repetition throughout the poem in the same way he uses rhythm to help the reader visualise what is happening. In each stanza the repetition of the final line, "the six hundred", shows what is happening to the soldiers. In stanzas one, two and three it says, "Rode the six hundred." Then they change to "Not the six hundred" as many had been killed. In stanza five it says, "Left of the six hundred" meaning the few that are left after the battle. Finally, in stanza six we are now honouring the soldiers so they are now the, "noble six hundred."

Tennyson makes most use of onomatopoeia during the three stanzas that are describing the battle itself (stanzas three, four and five), "thundered", "flashed", "shattered and sundered", "reeled" and "stormed" all help you hear and visualize what is happening at that moment in the story.

Dulce et Decorum Est

This poem was written in response to Jesse Pope's recruitment poem that glorifies war and describes the injuries the soldiers went through as badges

of honour and that the women loved it. Owen wrote his poem describing how bad war is and what horrible conditions the soldiers had to live in and made it as unglorified as possible.

The first stanza is about the soldiers walking away from the battle. They are all so tired and ragged from the fighting that they are just about able to walk and are looking like tramps which already shows that this poem isn't going to glorify war in any way at all, "like old beggars", "men marched asleep". They can hear the shells dropping in the background and they are just so glad to have turned their backs to the battle.

In the second stanza the marching soldiers are gassed and they are "fumbling" to put their gas masks on. Unfortunately one of the soldiers doesn't do this in time and starts to choke to death and the other soldiers have to watch in horror knowing they can't do anything to save him from this terrible death. When dying he is "floundering like a man in fire or lime."

The third stanza is about the poet's nightmares of how he wanted to help this other soldier but couldn't and how the dying soldier was begging for help. He also describes his emotions, "before my helpless sight".

The last stanza is about when the other soldiers who survived the attack are putting the dead soldier's body onto a wagon with all the other bodies and how they watch "the blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs" of the soldier every time the wagon "jolts".

Form

This poem is a first person narrative and it also brings the reader directly into the story. He does this by using lots of descriptive words, direct speech and by including the reader in the poem. Owen uses rhythm and rhyme to help pace this poem.

The rhythm of the first stanza is slow and steady because of the slow march of the tired soldiers away from the battle. In the second stanza the rhythm becomes less steady in the confusion and panic of the gas attack on the soldiers.

By using the similes " Knock-kneed, coughing like hags" and " like old beggars under sacks" he makes these young men sound old which is quite demeaning. By using words like " blood shod", " limped on", " lame" and " blind" he doesn't just set the scene but makes you feel as if you are actually there with these young soldiers and feel what they're feeling.

In the first stanza Owen uses lots of metaphors, " lame... blind... drunk... deaf", but none of these are true but it makes them sound so tired they have lost all of their senses. This helps with visualising your surrounding as you are marching with the soldiers. In the second stanza when the soldier is dying the metaphor he uses for this is drowning, he describes the gas as " a green sea" and describes the soldier as " drowning" and " floundering". In this metaphor he uses onomatopoeia: " gargling" and " guttering".

In the first line of the second stanza, " Gas! Gas! Quick boys," Tennyson doesn't tell you what is happening but makes you think you are there in the middle of it. He continues this in the first line of the last stanza where he

directly speaks to "you". "If in some smothering dream, you too could pace..." Everything that follows that line is what you can see happening and you are part of, "behind the wagon we flung him in." In the final few lines he asks you, "my friend", to make up your mind if war is a great thing or a horrible thing. He is also asking Jesse Pope to make up her mind but if you were reading this and didn't know to what it was a response to then he is asking every reader.

After Blenheim

The first stanza sets the scene of the poem. It is a nice summer's evening and Old Kaspar is out watching his grandchildren play. This will be used later as there is such a contrast to how it used to be in the same place.

This second stanza introduces us to the skull, which the children have found while playing. This skull will lead us to be told a few things about the "famous victory".

The third stanza has Old Kaspar identifying the object the children have found as a skull.

The next stanza tells us that Old Kaspar finds skulls all the time from the thousands of men that were killed during the "famous victory". He finds them when he is ploughing his land and they are turned up in the soil. This shows us that the bodies obviously weren't buried but just left there.

In the fifth stanza we have the grandchildren asking questions of the war.

We are now told that the war was between the English and French but we don't know what it was over or who won the war but we are told once again that it was a " famous victory".

In the next three stanzas we are told about the civilian cost of the war. We are told that villages were burnt to the ground and how mothers and their babies were killed in the fighting. We are also told that during the war his father lived nearby with his mother and a child but they had to flee because their house got burnt to the ground. We all know these are all horrible things but Old Kaspar believes these are all necessary for a " famous victory".

In stanza ten Wilhelmine realises what a horrible thing war is but Old Kaspar doesn't seem to think so at all, he just replies with, " It was a famous victory".

In the last stanza we have little Peterkin asking the great moral question of " But what good came of it at last?" But once again Old Kaspar doesn't know and ends up replying with " twas a famous victory".

Form

This poem is set out into eleven stanzas, which all have the same rhyme scheme and rhythm. Each stanza is six lines long and ends with a rhyming couplet. The whole poem is set out as a conversation with no action as the poet never goes into very much detail; the language is very plain and sentimental such as when he says, " I find them in the garden". He doesn't seem shocked or disgusted when he finds the skulls, Old Kaspar just thinks it

part of life and it's a sacrifice for the " famous victory". Old Kaspar doesn't seem to know very much about the war and is just telling the children what he has been told by others, " They say it was a shocking sight."

Southby asks questions through the children of what the war was over and who was in it but we never get a proper answer as Old Kaspar just ends up saying how it was a " famous victory". The only time Southby starts to go into detail is when he describing the outcome of what happened to the civilians during the war but even then Old Kaspar doesn't seem affected by it he still thinks that it was all necessary for the " famous victory" even though mothers and babies were killed and even his own family's lives were endangered. " My father lived at Blenheim then... And he was forced to fly: So with his wife and child he fled," By comparing this line to the " famous victory" that supposedly happened it has a contrast of views within the poem from the same character. By then end of the poem you are left with the idea that the children have a better view of what war is like, you can see this through the questions they ask. Peterkin asks " But what good came of it at last." and before that Wilhelmine says " twas a very wicked thing!" But Old Kaspar thinks that these are all sacrifices that you have to make for a " famous victory".

Comparisons

The most obvious comparison of these poems is that they are all about war but they all have completely different views on it. All three poems tell us about how violent war is but each in its own way. "...Light Brigade..." tells us

of how brave the soldiers were even though they knew they were going to die, "Dulce et..." tells us of the horrors of war and how disgusting it is and "After Blenheim" tells how it is all this destruction is necessary for a victory. The "...Light Brigade..." says "Boldly they rode and well... Into the jaws of death", this shows that the soldiers knew they were going to die but they carried on. "Dulce et..." says "Knock kneed, coughing like hags..." which makes these young soldiers sound to be old men all because of this battle, this makes them look so much weaker than they are and doesn't glorify the war at all like "...Light Brigade..." does. In "After Blenheim" war is made out to be destructive but it doesn't really matter because it is a sacrifice that has to be made in order for there to be a "famous victory", the poem says, "They say it was a shocking sight... After the field was won."

All three poems were written with different purposes, "...Light Brigade..." was written as a recruitment poem and it shows how noble and brave those six hundred soldiers were and is saying you could be one of those soldiers if you sign up to the army, "When can their glory fade... O the wild charge they made..." shows us this. "Dulce et..." is written in response to a poem Jessie Pope wrote encouraging young men to join the army. It shows the nightmare of war, "If you could hear at every jolt, the blood come gurgling from the froth-corrupted lungs..."

I think "After Blenheim" was written to tell us of the sacrifices that have to be made in order to gain a victory in war. It tells us of some of the horrible things that happen like "and many a childing mother then... and new-born baby died... But things like that, you know, must be... At every famous

victory." It shows the attitude of the poet; he doesn't mind all that destruction that goes along with war.

Each poem also has a different message about war; "...Light Brigade..." glorifies war and says it is the most honourable way to die, " Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade... Noble Six hundred!" " Dulce et..." tells of how horrible war is and how bad a way it is to die and it is anything but honourable to die in battle or if you don't die how horrible the nightmares of battle are, " In all my dreams before my helpless sight... He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning." " After Blenheim" was written warning us about the sacrifices of war but not to worry as it is all needed for a victory, " Why, 'twas a very wicked thing! Said little Wilhelmine; Nay... Nay... my little girl, quoth he, It was a famous victory."