

The soldier by rupert brooke essay sample

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In a time before conscription, this poem was an important, effective persuasion tool for recruiting potential soldiers.

The basic, overall purpose of 'The Soldier' is to encourage English people to sign up to fight in the war. It focused on the apparent aspects, experiences and events relating to death; describing them in a positive way. One might say that the message of this poem, literally, is "Join the war! Don't be afraid of death; it is a victory for your Country."

It achieves this persuasion by introducing patriotic ideas into people's minds, describing war and death in glorious terms. During the time in which people would have read 'The Soldier', they were unaware of what the experience of war was really like. Oblivious to the reality of war's horror, people would have been susceptible to the poem's seduction. By beginning with an apostrophe, the poem appeals directly to its reader with "If I should die think only this of me..." The poet wants people only to think positively of his death, should it come to be. He goes on to say "...That there's some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England", trying to make people think of his death as a victory, where his decomposing corpse conquers the land where he perished, making it become "England".

This line also makes people believe that the same would apply their death if it were to come about, that their bodies would make the land where they die become "England". Continuing, he writes "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 of England's, breathing English air, washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home." These

lines metaphorically describe his corpse as becoming “ a richer dust” than that of the earth’s, and personify England as being his and every English person’s mother with the metaphor “ a dust whom England bore”. They also describe his body as “ a body of England’s”; implying that he belonged to his country.

There are frequent references to “ England”, emphasising its importance and relevance, and England is described as “ home”, appropriately, a place of comfort and belonging. The last lines read, “ And think, this heart, all evil shed away, a pulse in the eternal mind, no less gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given; her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; and laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness, in hearts at peace, under an English heaven.” These final lines use lots of peaceful, positive ideas. Firstly, the poet writes about the cleansing and purification of death, where “ all evil” is “ shed away” and the thoughts given by England and given back somewhere. Again addressing England as “ her”, he personifies the country. Then he uses a simile: “ dreams as happy as her day”, meaning that both England’s dreams and England’s days were happy. Writing about happiness, “ laughter”, “ friends”, “ gentleness” and “ peace”, he induces pleasant emotions into people’s minds. He ends describing England as “ heaven”, a spiritual place of eternal happiness and joy.

‘ The Soldier’ is effective in inducing patriotism into the minds of potential soldiers and ultimately persuading them into volunteering to fight in the war. It is a creative form of brainwashing, in my opinion. It, along with other poems of the same nature, indoctrinates people into naï½ve ways of

thinking, for the mere purpose of gaining additional soldiers – during a time without conscription – and temporarily boosting morale.

Dulce Et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owen was another war poet, but not one who set out to promote war. Indeed he was one who wanted to make people aware of the realities of war, before plunging in, willing to die in what one would think would be glory. He had experienced the atmosphere of the trenches, and knew the indisputable truth of what life and death during the war was like.

The overall message of ‘Dulce Et Decorum Est’ is that one must realise the horrible truth; war is not glorious, neither is death. War is gruesome, terrifying and shocking.

Immediately, Owen endeavours to make the reader feel the suffering of the soldiers, opening with “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.” By using long sentences and near-onomatopoeic words such as “sludge”, he gives the impression of the activity being slow and drawn out. This adds to the effect of the horrid slow, torture of the trenches. He also initiates the poem with an appropriate simile: “...like old beggars under sacks”. This represents the frailty and weakness of the soldiers. It is aided by another simile: “coughing like hags”, which symbolises the deathlike state and disease of the soldiers, at the same time as reinforcing the idea of their

frailty. When Owen writes “ Men marched asleep”, he refers to them being oblivious to the fighting that was going on around them, almost unconscious.

They had a long walk back to their camps, and so ‘ switched off’ mentally, becoming mostly unaware of the surrounding battle. When Owen says “ Many had lost their boots, but limped on, blood-shod”, he is speaking about the way in which the appalling conditions (mud, sludge) caused the loss of the soldier’s footwear. He uses the metaphor “ blood-shod”, meaning they wore their own blood as shoes (their feet were covered in blood), just after emphasising the lack of pace to the soldiers’ advancement with the words “ limped on”. Also, by using the word “ but”, he implies that the soldiers were either determined or just not thinking about what was going on, as they continued to walk without boots. Writing the metaphor “ drunk with fatigue”, Wilfred describes how the soldiers were so tired, their reactions would have been as if they were drunk. “...Deaf even to the hoots of gas-shells dropping softly behind” represents how poor their reactions would have been.

The poem then spontaneously launches you into a panicked mood with the – in contrast – extremely quick words “ Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!” By using monosyllabic words, and quick-to-finish sentences, the emotion of panic is well created. “ An ecstasy of fumbling, fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,” implies that the panic was so great there may have been an adrenaline rush for the desperate-to-survive soldiers. By saying “ but someone still was yelling out and stumbling and flound’ring like a man in fire or lime” he introduces another dilemma; someone is still panicking, unable to get their gas mask on. Wilfred uses the word ‘ someone’ as if to imply the

insignificance of a single soldier, contrary to 'The Soldier'. The undignified death is also portrayed here. Another simile: "like a man in fire or lime" helps to further describe the desperate nature of the soldier's frenzied panic, making you think of his struggle as being like a man on fire.

By "Dim through the misty panes and thick green light, as under a green sea, I saw him drowning", Owen describes the spread of the green gas, and the way in which the soldier was deprived of air, unable to breathe, in the thick green clouds of gas. The simile and metaphor "as under a green sea, I saw him drowning" is appropriate in this case, with the green sea representing the lethal gas cloud, and the drowning being the suffocation of the Soldier. In a separate pair of lines, Owen writes "In all my dreams before my helpless sight he plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning." He means that after observing the death of this soldier, the images haunt him, particularly in his dreams. When saying "helpless sight" he refers to his inability to block out these horrible thoughts and images of the soldier. The words "guttering, choking, drowning" resemble, in their pronunciation, what they serve to symbolise. Effectively, the poet achieves the imagery and sound through the use of yet more onomatopoeic words.

He goes on to say "If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace behind the wagon that we flung him in..." making it known to people that not only are soldier's deaths undignified; the treatment of the bodies was equally unbelievable. The words "...and watch the white eyes writhing in his face" refer to the rapid twisting of the soldier's eyes, due to the extreme pain. Owen describes how blood was coughed up from the lungs of the soldier who

suffered the gas attack: "...if you could hear, at every jolt, the blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs". Soldiers died slowly, horribly and painfully of gas attacks.

He uses the adjective 'innocent' in the lines "bitter as the cud of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues" to represent the idea that the person who died was innocent. It was not his fault that his death came about; he did not start the war. Owen ends with the lines "my friend, you would not tell with such high zest to children ardent for some desperate glory, the old Lie: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." By making the final verse into one large sentence, the ending phrase is devalued by the overwhelming number of horrible events described before it. By ending with "you would not tell with such high zest... the old lie..." Owen suggests, using an understatement ("you would not tell with such high zest"), that if you were to experience what he had gone through, you would in no way accept the phrase as being truthful.

The poem achieved its objective of making clear the grim truths about war, by successfully debasing the Latin phrase meaning, "It is sweet and dignified to die for your country".

The poem was effective as it used appropriate vocabulary throughout, and was able to describe things in graphic detail. 'Dulce et Decorum Est' did well in steering the emotions of the reader.

Judging by what actually happened during the war, the second poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' is more accurate in its treatment of the subject matter. The

first poem glorifies death from battle as being honourable and dignified. However, the second poem tries to not only render patriotism – as conveyed in the first poem – worthless, but also to comment upon (and be truthful about) the mental and physical suffering endured by those who fought. It also touches upon how the innocent were affected: often killed. The poem serves to highlight the inhumane nature of war, and to make clear that death is most often not dignified nor glorious, as the first poem, 'The Soldier', implied.

I prefer 'Dulce et Decorum Est' overall. It is truthful, powerful, influential, and emotive. I respect Rupert Brooke for being able to write so convincingly, but his intentions are not as pure as those of Wilfred Owens. 'The Soldier' was more metaphorical but less truthful. 'Dulce et Decorum Est' was much more descriptive and detailed. It was able to create strong imagery with its carefully chosen vocabulary. The onomatopoeia was particularly appropriate when it was used ("guttering", "choking"). The aspect which compelled me most about 'Dulce est Decorum est' was the reality of it. In 'The Soldier' the poet is merely trying to encourage patriotism, but in 'Dulce et Decorum Est', Owen is writing from experience, from the heat. His emotions and experiences were very real; in my opinion this makes for a better read.