

Suicide in the trenches- analysis



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Suicide In The Trenches In my analysis, I will demonstrate how Siegfried Sassoon has used many different language techniques to show his perspective on the true meaning of war. For example, the poet has used simplistic diction that creates an image of the destruction of a “ simple soldier boy”. At first we see him whistling, this then degrades to depression which lead him to committing suicide. Siegfried Sassoon concludes his poem with anger and a powerful message. “ Sneak home and pray you’ll never know” emphasizes that those who aren’t soldiers have to “ sneak home and pray” to show their empathy for the soldiers.

In the last line it implies the fact that the crowd doesn’t have to go through “ the hell where youth and laughter go”. Sassoon had used a simple rhyme scheme of A-A-B-B to create a ‘ joyful’ melody in the readers mind. The rhyme scheme makes the poem sound very light hearted when it is actually a very sad topic. It is quoted in “ I knew a simple soldier boy Who grinned at life in empty joy” the sound ‘ oy’ sounds very content which creates an irony throughout the whole poem. It makes an impact on the reader since it would sound like a nursery rhyme.

It sets up the paradox of ‘ nursery rhyme’ but ending with ‘ death’. In the first stanza Siegfried Sassoon has made a very innocuous opening with “ I knew a simple soldier boy”. As you read more, it reveals the evolution of the cost of war. In the first stanza the young soldier immediately loses the innocence of youth. The poet has used simple words to create an impact to the reader. Such as “ simple” has connotations with innocence which establishes the soldier is still a young boy and not a man.

In the 3rd line of the first stanza Sassoon quoted “ slept soundly”. The usage of sibilance creates a harsh and bitter tone throughout the stanza. Also, it adds an importance on the phrase “ slept soundly”. People who can sleep soundly are the people who have nothing to worry about before they go to bed. This highlights how the boy was so innocent at the start of his experience in war. This is also linked with the word “ whistled” (4th line, 1st paragraph), which is an action done when only someone is content and oblivious.

At the end of the first stanza, Siegfried Sassoon had hinted by writing “ lark”. Larks were found in the countryside that might mean the “ simple soldier boy” was from there. News and propaganda weren’t available in the countryside. Before leaving for the war the young soldier boy did not know the reality of a soldier’s life. The delicate “ lark” is the opposite of the true reality of a soldier’s life. The second stanza contrasts with the first stanza it shows how war has shaped this young boy. This is shown in “ in winter trenches, cowed and glum”.

The line “ grinned at life” relates to “ cowed and glum” as it suggests the inner changes in his maturity which leads him on to committing suicide. This links on to “ lack of rum” that shows imagery. This establishes the scenario that the boy is going through alcoholism. One of the symptoms of alcoholism is depression. Additionally, rum was usually given to troops before an attack to steady the nerves, increase confidence and numb feeling. Therefore this could inform the reader that the young soldier boy’s solution for life is death.

The tone that the poet wanted to emphasise is a very bitter and sarcastic as we can see in the last stanza “ You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye”.
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From this quote Sassoon strongly feels the general public is not able to empathise for the devoted soldiers. This brings out the theme that nobody knows how tragic war feels like without personal experience. The quote also shows how much anger Sassoon had towards the whole concept of war. "You smug-faced crowd" is represented as an insult to the higher status men during the period of war.

The trenches had apparently turned a young light-hearted boy into a disheartened boy who had "put a bullet through his brain". The alliteration of the letter 'b' also makes a severe and brute tone that creates a very bitter mood, mainly because the highpoint of the story is about the suicide. The rhyme of "brain" and "again" at line eight tries to form a connection that although a young boy was convinced to join the war and fought tremendously for his country and himself. However, in the end, he was pushed to his limit and "no one spoke of him again". This shows how cruel and selfish war is.

The boy had sacrificed his childhood fun, laughter and playful life in for nothing to return. This is effective because it makes the reader think about 'why is there war' and 'why are there innocent lives at risk' which creates the bitter mood. The diction used in the poem sends the reader a clear message about war. In the last stanza, the word "kindling" is being used to describe the "eyes" of the "smug-faced crowds". "Kindling" is used to describe the facial description which shows that it is a very shallow expression feature that expresses the lack of empathy shown to the young men.

However, Siegfried tries to show with a sarcastic tone that they think war is a glorious thing; they feel proud of the children risking their lives with nothing in return and seem to understand and appreciate what they are doing. But in reality the public cannot imagine what these children are going through. This is how the word “ kindling” reveals a shallow side of everyone’s personality. In my personal opinion, the last stanza is the strongest and most impactful stanza. While the previous two stanzas shows the transformation of the boy when he enters war.

The last stanza directly attacks people who support war, and only see the glory and honour. The poet shows us the other side: the dying and suffering. “ Sneak home and pray you’ll never know” shows that while the “ crowds” support war, they are not willing or are too afraid to think of the consequences, sacrifice and price of war. A price that separates families and destroys children. The poet uses an extreme example to illustrate his point of view. The poet was successful as it has left me thinking about the hardship that a soldier endures and the true cost of war.