

# Dulce et decorum est

Food & Diet



Poetry often acts on the ear before it acts on the mind. Wilfred Owen's poem *Dulce et decorum est* evidently conveys this message. He utilises techniques like sound to deliberately enhance the imagery of the poem to make it appear more realistic. The overall moral of this poem that he has conveyed through *Dulce et decorum est* is that it is a lie when people tell the old saying " *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*" connoting that " it is sweet and fitting to die for ones native land". He establishes this idea through sound to enhance his poem for the reader so they can imagine themselves being in the same experience as him. Owen displays through sound how tired and fed up the soldiers in war were. The quote, " knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge" demonstrates how exhausted and fed up they felt. They were ' coughing like hags' indicating of how unhealthy they must have been and how polluted the air is from smoke and bad gases. The quote ' we cursed through sludge' shows how mad, sick and frustrated with war they must have been. Owen utilises sounds like ' coughing' and ' cursing' to imply how unhappy they were. He's used these sounds purposely to enhance the reader's image of this moment conveying that poetry acts of the ear before it acts on the mind. Owen has portrayed the image of how ' empty and lifeless' they must be feeling through the quote, " On the haunting flares we turned our backs". Owen hints how daunting it is to hear the loud and frightening flares to go off continually, so often that they no longer cared that those flares were going off, they just ' turned their backs.' He uses the sound of the haunting flares to show the reader his own experiences. This quote makes one imagine how loud those flares must be, that even grown men find them frightening. He also creates a war torn atmosphere through the use of sound. Owen has demonstrated this

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notion through sound to show that techniques are intentionally used to show that poetry works on the ear before the mind. Dulce et Decorum est establishes the idea that sound is often used to enhance imagery to make that moment appear more 'realistic'. This is evident through the quote, "Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots of gas-shells dropping softly behind." Owen has conveyed through sound the image that they were so 'dead' they were deaf even to the 'gas-shells' dropping behind the soldiers. The imagery is that they're so tired they cannot even hear anything. Using the term 'drunk with fatigue' shows how exhausted they were. Owen has used these noises to create the set up the men were living in. This quote is a clear image of the war-type environment. Owen has expressed the techniques of sound through the use of imagery to show that sound helps as an effect to act on the ear before actually thinking about the image is trying to form for the reader. Owen describes the urgent situation once the gas-shells are dropped. He explains this through his past experiences. The quote "Gas! Gas! Quick boys! - an ecstasy of fumbling, fitting the clumsy helmets just in time, But someone still was yelling and stumbling' and floundering like a man in fire or lime." gives the reader the impression through sound before imagery shouting 'gas!' The image that appears in the readers mind then is all the soldiers grabbing helmets(gas masks). One can also picture a soldier just being a little too late to put his helmet on. Owen has created this image in the readers mind to show his experiences through the reader's eyes. He displays evidence that poetry takes effect on the ear before the mind. Owen produces the image of how horrible some of his experiences are through the use of sound to show that sound enhances imagery. He forms this mental picture through the quote, "He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

" This image appears to be coming from Owens past experiences as if he once saw a man die right in front of his eyes. Reading this, the reader can just imagine how frightening this memory must be. Using sounds such as ' guttering, choking and drowning' creates a shocking and frightening experience combined with imagery. Owen illustrates the image of the soldier drowning and gasping for life through the use of sound and imagery to convey the message that sound can be used to act on the ear before we form a mental image of the memory. Using techniques such as sound enhance the image that Owen is trying to mentally picture in the readers mind. Dulce et decorum est further portrays the experience of watching one die in front of ones eyes. He does this by including the reader itself into the poem. Owen uses sound to enhance the reality of ones death. He uses sound as an effect through the quote " If you could hear, at every jolt the blood come gargling from the froth- corrupted lungs. " Owen has added ' If you could hear' purposely to incorporate the reader into the poem so the image he has mentally pictured in the readers mind by imagery had a much greater effect. He has used these techniques intentionally conveying the idea that poetry acts on the mind before it acts on the ear. In addition, Owen tries to include the reader into the poem. He writes it in such a way that it's as if he's telling the reader the moral. The quote, " My friend, you would not tell with such high zest to the children ardent for some separate glory, the old lie: Dulce eat decorum est pro patria mori" (translation: " it is sweet and fitting to die for ones native land"). Owen establishes this notion as an effect, so when the reader reads it in their mind, it's as if Owen himself is giving the reader advice. He has shown us this moral through the use of sound to enhance the effects on imagery. Overall, Poetry acts on the ear before it acts

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on the mind. The moral is that is a lie when they say it is sweet and fitting to die for ones native land. Dulce et decorum est shows that it is evident of this and that sound enhances meaning in poems in order to make them appear more realistic to form a better image in the readers mind. This technique is used purposely to create a war-like atmosphere so the reader can not just see his experiences, but also imagine us being in the same one.