

Wifred owen – disabled analysis essay



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Wilfred Owen's "Disabled" Wilfred Owen's captivating poem, entitled "Disabled," sends its readers on a journey into the life of a World War I soldier after he has returned home from the war. Throughout the process of writing this poem, Owen made some stunning revisions that served to change the meaning and the direction of the poem as a whole. Through the careful analysis of the final poem and the revisions that were made in order to complete the finished piece, it is possible to come to some sort of conclusion about what Owen was trying to convey about the disabled soldier. In his original manuscript, Owen introduces the reader to the man's physical surroundings by stating that he is "Sitting, between two crutches, in the park" ([www. hcu.](http://www.hcu.ox.ac.uk/jtap/images/mss/bl/ms43721/47a.jpg)

[ox. ac. uk/jtap/images/mss/bl/ms43721/47a. jpg](http://www.ox.ac.uk/jtap/images/mss/bl/ms43721/47a.jpg)). He continues in the third line, writing that the disabled man was "Armless, sewn short at the elbows." From this initial introduction, the reader is able to picture a man that has to use crutches in order to get around, but it is unclear what condition his legs are in.

In the final document, Owen changes the poem so that it introduces the man as sitting in a wheel chair, and in the third line, describes the man as legless rather than armless. The reason why Owen may have chosen for the man to be using a wheel chair rather than crutches is because we often tend to visualize a physically disabled man using a wheel chair. On the other hand, the vision of a man using crutches would usually imply only a temporary disability, such as a broken limb. As Owen continues the poem, we come to find out that the disabled man has lost confidence in his own personal strength and vitality, made evident by his observation at the conclusion of

the poem that women's eyes pass " from him to the strong men that were whole. " Therefore, the man's use of a wheel chair coincides more closely to his permanent loss of physical ability.

Also important in this first line is the change that Owen makes from the man sitting " in the park" to the man sitting " waiting for dark. It is important to look at how these two phrases can change the whole introduction to the physical setting of the poem. Appearing in the manuscript, the man's presence in the park gives the reader a feeling of happiness and optimism. The man can be pictured sitting in the park, enjoying himself and leaving the reader with the feeling that the man is content.

On the other hand, if the man is introduced as " waiting for dark," it can be implied that " dark" is a symbolic representation of impending doom or death. Changing this single phrase transports the meaning of the first line from one of solitude to pessimism. There is another instance in the poem in which Owen struggles between the use of the word " park" or " dark. " This occurs in the third line of the poem, and in the manuscript it reads " Through the dark/Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn.

" When the reader tries to make sense of this line it is through the use of sound that we can understand what is happening. Due to the use of the word " dark," we are unable to visualize anything else in the scene besides darkness, and instead we can only hear the sound of the boys' voices. This use of sound rather than vision is somewhat inconsistent with the rest of the poem, where most of our knowledge about the disabled man and the world around him is made possible by the poem's ability to lay out a mental picture

for the reader. It is no surprise, then, that Owen changed these lines so that the poem reads “ Through the park/Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn. ” This allows the reader to visualize boys roaming the park.

We can both see the boys’ melancholy behavior as well as hear their voices saddening with each passing moment. In the tenth line of the manuscript, Owen takes the reader back to the man’s memories before the war, and recounts how things were “ In the old times, before he smashed his knees. ” In the final version of the poem, Owen writes “ In the old times, before he threw away his knees. ” The original description of the soldier, with his knees smashed, leaves the reader with a visual picture of a man who still has his knees and therefore his legs in tact.

They are still a part of his body. From this, it is implied that there is still some hope of saving or fixing his knees, therefore regaining the use of his legs. On the other hand, the final poem, which states that the man “ threw away his knees,” allows the reader to picture the man as Owen does. A man that has thrown away his knees would lead us to believe that his knees were actually physically removed from his body and are never to be used again.

The final version of the poem has omitted a whole portion of the manuscript that describes what Owen’s physical appearance was like before the war.

This description includes and explanation of the attire that he used to wear and how handsome he was. The reason why Owen may have chosen to omit this section of the poem is because the majority of the poem focuses on the man’s present condition rather than the past, and the parts that do focus on the past are more pessimistic than this portion. As Owen takes us through

the disabled man's thoughts as he sits in the park, the reader can get a sense of optimism and opportunities lost. Feelings like this are intensified by ideas such as the one presented in line eighteen. In the manuscript, it is written that the man had poured his colour " down shell-holes till his youth ran dry (www.

hcu.ox.ac.uk/jtap/images/mss/bl/ms43721/48a.jpg).

This phrase implies that the man has left his youth behind him and that he did so at some point during the war. The war was successful at robbing him of a significant portion of his life. In the completed poem, Owen changes this line, saying that the man " poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry. Owen's choice to alter this one word, from youth to veins, shows us how the man not only lost his youth during the war, but ultimately lost his entire life. A man whose veins have run dry is a man that essentially has no life left in his body, a man that is as good as dead.

Throughout the poem, the man is troubled by the world's indifference toward him and the ungratefulness that is shown towards him after he returns home from the war. This is apparent when he describes how only some cheered him home, but not as many as would cheer a goal that he scores in a football game. Only a solemn man who brought him fruits/Thanked him; and then enquired about his soul. " The ingratitude that the man feels by the people of the country that he helped to protect is one of the resounding themes of the poem.

This feeling is conveyed in the last two lines of the completed poem when the man thinks " Why don't they come/And put him into bed? Why don't they

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come? ” In the manuscript, the poem had originally read “ Why don’t they come/And carry him to bed? Why don’t they come? ” (www. hcu. ox. c. uk/jtap/images/mss/bl/ms43721/49a. jpg). This action of carrying him to bed rather than putting him into bed requires some sort of effort and affection by the person that is doing the actual job of getting him to bed. Carrying him requires doing something to help him. Rephrasing the line so that he is being put to bed makes it seem like a duty that needs to be done rather than as a favor to help a man who is unable to help himself.

Through the many revisions that are made in this poem in order to reduce the final version, Owen has left us with a very personal portrayal of one man’s experience and outcome due to World War I. The purpose of his revisions are to allow the reader to become more aware of the man’s physical conditions and the mood that permeates throughout the poem. The poem lets the reader actually see what the man looks like, almost as if we were sitting in the park along side him and talking with him about the condition the war has left him in, both mentally and physically. The poem becomes more realistic and personal to the reader as each revision is completed.