

# In flander's fields essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

“ In Flanders’ Fields,” written by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae during World War I, is to this day, one of the most monumental war poems ever composed. Created as a legacy of the horrifying battle in the Ypres salient in 1915; this very vivid poem gives its reader the sense of death, while its beautiful images and powerful messages make it seemingly unforgettable. Perhaps one reason this piece of writing has been so successful is because it was made to describe a personal experience of McCrae’s.

It seems that McCrae felt very strongly about war, especially about the battle in the Ypres salient:

“ I wish I could embody on paper some of the varied sensations of that seventeen days...Seventeen days of Hades! At the end of the first day if anyone had told us we had to spend seventeen days there, we would have folded our hands and said it could not have been done.” (John McCrae)

The death of a former student, Alexis Helmer, is what made the battle in the Ypres salient especially personal for Lt. McCrae. Out of grief, McCrae arranged the funeral and after wrote the poem, which is said to be exact:

“ The poem was exactly an exact description of the scene in front of us both. He used the word ‘ blow’ in that line because the poppies actually were being blown that morning by a gentle east wind. It never occurred to me at that time that it would ever be published. It seemed to me just an exact description of the scene.” (Cyril Allinson, NCO)

There is a lot of imagery in this poem, all of which supports the language in some way. The first section of the poem:

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow

Between the crosses, row on row,

That mark our place; and in the sky

The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the guns below.

This piece of the poem is meant to give the reader a picture of what this place, "Flanders' Field," might look like. It tells us that there are rows upon rows of white crosses that represent where the dead lay. Red poppies, which can only grow where there are no competing plants, lined these crosses. The battlefield, in fact, the whole front, consisted of churned up soil, which is why the poppies bloomed that year like no one had ever seen before. The poppies could possibly represent the butchery that occurred during battle all around the purity of the young soldiers who died. The lark flying around in the sky above the firing guns during combat has lots of significance. It shows that even though we as humans were at war, the rest of the world and all of its being still went on regardless of what we were doing, and that despite what we may think, during times like that we forget about what's really important.

The second passage:

We are the Dead. Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved, and were loved, and now we lie

In Flanders' fields.

This whole second piece of the poem basically entails one thing: The soldiers that fought were real people! They had feelings, thoughts, loved ones, and they breathed just like you and I. He is trying to express feelings for the dead soldiers. Showing that before they died they were feeling the same things that we do. It could also mean that they didn't want to die, but now, because of the war, they have been killed.

The third and final segment:

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw

The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow

In Flanders' fields.

In this last portion of the poem, McCrae tells us that the departed soldiers didn't just give their lives for no reason. They wanted to win the war. Now they are saying that fate is in the hands of the living. The torch could be meant as a symbol of victory or leadership. The dead are now passing it (the torch) on to the soldiers who are still in battle. It is almost like the dead are pleading with the living. The dead feel they can never rest if the mission is

not completed. Their plea is to help them rest and to honor their memory by winning the war.

Hopefully you can now see why Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" has been such a milestone in the history of war poems. McCrae does a remarkable job of describing what the souls of departed soldiers might express to the living. By using a personal experience, McCrae managed to show the world what war is actually like through his powerful use of imagery and message. That is why "In Flanders Field" has stood the test of time and will always be one of the most memorable poems ever written.