

The soldier, futility and anthem for doomed youth essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A sonnet is a poem fourteen lines in length. Sonnets follow various rhyming patterns, such as the idea of three quatrains and a rhyming couplet, as was promoted by the sonnets written by William Shakespeare.

The Iambic Pentameter, the idea of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, is a common feature of sonnets, as are elevated themes such as love, death, war and honour. The three poems I have chosen to compare: 'The Soldier' by Rupert Brooke, 'Futility' by Wilfred Owen, and 'Anthem For Doomed Youth' also by Wilfred Owen, are all on the theme of war. The most striking difference between these three poems is the manner in which they portray war. Whilst 'The Soldier' seems to glorify war, making the soldiers who fought appear as heroes, the other two sonnets depict the apparent pointlessness of war.

In 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', the title alone presents a feeling of the worthlessness of war: the word 'doomed' shows that the young soldiers are not yet in danger, but by fighting in a war they are approaching an imminent death. The word 'anthem' is a contradiction, an example of irony. Anthems are glorious, celebratory songs, and by no means is the poem joyous.

Naturally, the title 'Futility' also leads the reader into an expectation of a poem describing the pointlessness of war. Although the title 'The Soldier' is not directly celebratory of the dead warrior in response to which the poem was written; it is clearly respectful, as by naming the poem in the way the author did, an entire poem is dedicated in the memory of the deceased. In 'Futility', a very tender feeling is captivated in the opening lines: "Move him into the sun- Gently its touch awoke him once, At home, whispering of fields unsown.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-soldier-futility-and-anthem-for-doomed-youth-essay/>

“ This compares to the first lines in ‘ The Soldier’, which launch the reader directly into the clear feeling of patriotism that the sonnet presents: “ If I should die, think only this of me: That there’s some corner of a foreign field That is forever England... ” ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’ has a different beginning again. Although similar to ‘ Futility’ in the fact that it does not condone war, it cannot be described as tender, as the words used are decidedly harsh.

“... Only the monstrous anger of the guns. Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle, Can patter out their hasty orisons.

“ The very opening line of ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’, as is quoted below, is significant in portraying the author’s critical view on the masses of casualties taken in a war. I feel the association with cattle is successful, as the death of a cow, or even of an entire herd of cattle, is, although not a cheerful thought, not devastating, and so the comparison to cattle seems to minimize the deaths of the soldiers. Owen himself did not believe that their deaths should be devalued, but he perhaps felt that the sheer number of casualties reduced the impact of the passing of individual soldiers. The link with cattle is also due to the inhumane way the masses of fighters died. “ What passing-bells for those who die as cattle? ” The differences of opinion concerning the decency of war are continued through the duration of the sonnets. ‘ Futility’ talks of why men are born at all, why they live such beautiful lives, if only to be killed later? ‘ The Soldier’ however, seems to believe that dying for your country is an honour, and that one would perfectly at peace, should his end come as a result of serving his country.

Brooke must have believed that fighting in a war resembles undertaking some sort of crusade; and that those who fight have their sins forgotten and will go to heaven. The following line corroborates this: “ In hearts at peace, under an English heaven. ” The endings of the sonnets also contrast. The line quoted below is the last line of ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’’, and, although dismal, appeals to me. It is a successful metaphor, and suggests that at the end of every day, blinds are drawn across the battlefield, leaving the deceased soldiers in peace.

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds. “ In ‘ The Soldier’ the ending is considerably more positive, and tells of how the hearts of the departed soldiers will be at peace in the glory that is England. The ending of ‘ Futility’ differs once again, and continues the general anti-war feeling of the poem. The mention of heaven in the final line of ‘ The Soldier’ brings a religious aspect into the sonnet, and the linking of God to England added weight to Brooke’s nationalistic views. There are also biblical references in the other two poems, although this reference is not always as obvious.

In ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’ Wilfred Owen speaks of choirs, presumably choirs in a church, along with prayers and church bells. “ No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells; Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,- This rather depressing religious notation implies that religion and the Church are the only things left for the dead; and that there is no one to mourn for them, save the choirs who, because the number of dead is so large, cannot mourn personally and privately for each individual soldier. The biblical implementation in ‘ Futility’ differs to both the other poems. In ‘ Futility’ the author proposes that there is no point in living. He says: “ Full-nerved, – still <https://assignbuster.com/the-soldier-futility-and-anthem-for-doomed-youth-essay/>

warm, – too hard to stir? Was I for this the clay grew tall? ” The mention of clay represents the development of the human race from Adam, who, according to the Bible, was created from clay.

Owen is wondering why, as it appears to him, the human race grew only to see its members perish? As I mentioned earlier, the patriotic feeling in ‘ The Soldier’ is undoubtedly clear. Brooke reminisces about the beauty of England, stating her name a total of six times in the short duration of the sonnet. Quotes such as the one used below, depict England as a clean, joyful country, a fresh, wholesome land. “ Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness. ” This compares considerably to the other poems – in ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’ England is not mentioned once, and in ‘ Futility’ the only reference is quoted below: “ Move him into the sun – Gently its touch awoke him once, At home, whispering of fields unsown. ” The involvement of the word ‘ home’ is only done so under bleak conditions: it reminds the audience of how the soldier used to live and work as a farmer, before the war began.

In conclusion, there are a number of prominent differences between the three sonnets I chose to analyse, despite their being on the same theme. Rupert Brooke, the author of ‘ The Soldier’ is clearly pro-war, and his patriotic feeling proposed plainly. He feels soldiers deserve respect and honour, and that it is a privilege to be involved in a war. The following line suggests that those who fight have God’s approval: “ Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home. ” The two other poems are unmistakably in opposition to war, and their content is based on the authors’ opinion that war is pointless.

Lines such as the one featured below are significant in delivering these outlooks: “ O what made fatuous sunbeams toil To break earth’s sleep at all? ” A positive feeling is created in ‘ The Soldier’, despite the negative results of war, and the splendour of England is projected. Brooke believed God was in favour of war, and felt that joining a country’s war effort was the way to be at peace. Abrasive language is used in ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’ to portray the pointlessness of war, and a mood of sadness is created, teamed with, I feel, almost a sense of guilt. The line featured below describes a sort of love that has turned wicked. The author describes a love, which, once so strong, has died and become worthless in the monstrosity of war.

“ The pallor of girls’ brows shall be their pall”. Reminiscences of life prior to the war are present in ‘ Futility’. The author’s hatred of war is delivered in a slightly different manner to ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’. In ‘ Futility’ more gentle words are used, and the whole tone of the poem is more subdued. As a result, my preferred poem is ‘ Futility’, although the splendour promoted by ‘ The Soldier’, and the descriptive language in ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’ are highly attractive.