

# The volunteer and henry v essay sample



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The Volunteer is a Pro-War poem written by Herbert Asquith. Asquith uses roman imagery to invoke a feeling of greatness and honour. Asquith begins his poem by describing the miserable, mundane life of a clerk, working in a 'city grey'. He opens with the words 'Here lies...' that are normally used to begin writing on a gravestone. This 'epitaph' – style opening gives the idea that the clerk has now passed away and the poem will concentrate on events beforehand. We are told the clerk has spent '... half his life...' doing boring work ('.. Toiling at ledgers.. '), his days drifting away.

There is a distinct lack of fulfilment in his life, '.. With no lance broken in life's tournament...' ('Lance' is roman imagery) And yet he dreams of '.. The gleaming eagles of the legions..' and horsemen '.. thundering past beneath the oriflamme..' (or battle flag. ) Asquith cleverly uses the expression '.. The gleaming eagles of the legions..' to conjure up ideas in the reader's mind of great gleaming roman soldiers.

This adds to the ideology that war is a glamorous and noble thing. In his second stanza, Asquith tells us that '.. those waiting dreams are satisfied.. Obviously, the clerk has joined the army. He talks of '.. waiting dreams..' giving the impression that the clerk has dreamt of this for a very long time. He goes on to say '.. From twilight to the halls of dawn he went..' I think what he means is that the clerk has gone from his dull city to a new, brighter beginning. And although he died he is happy. '.. His lance is broken but he lies content..' Because in that 'high hour in which he lived and died' he achieved something he had dreamt of forever.

Asquith also mentions that the man needs no reward for his actions ('.. e wants no recompense... '). In his last two lines of the poem, Asquith writes: '.. nor need he any hearse to bear him hence, who goes to join the men of Agincourt... ' What he is saying is that he who fights for his country needs no other honour in death for fighting is his reward. This poem is very pro-war and is remarkably influential in using roman imagery to sway the reader's judgement in his favour. Overall, it is written quite effectively. Another pro-war poem is Henry V. It is actually a speech from Henry V by William Shakespeare.

It is his interpretation of what Henry V would have said to his men in an effort to inspire them before they fought at Agincourt. The writer uses the idea that the men will be remembered as heroes and become famous to enthuse them. He begins his speech by naming the day ' the feast of Crispian. ' He goes onto declare that '.. He that outlives this day... ' shall stand taller ('.. Stand a tiptoe... ') on this day in the future. This will make the men that fight feel superior; and more importantly it will make those who don't fight feel inferior. The words ' feast' and flowing cups' are also used.

These give the imagery of a better life with plenty of food and drink. (possibly that of a king. ) He goes on say that every year the man who fought: '.. will strip his sleeve, and shows his scars, And say - These wounds I had on Crispin's day... ' This quote fits in with the thought that scars are a notable accessory and that they will impress people. The men who fought will have the image in their minds that they will be able to show them off to people and feel courageous.

He also pronounces to the brave soldiers that they will undoubtedly become famous. ‘.. Our names... familiar... s household words.. ‘ stating that the names of those who fought will be as famous as ‘.. Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter, Warwick and Talbot.. ‘ these were all extremely well known and respected figures. Now the men have the belief that for fighting this battle they will be remembered as kings, fame will be theirs. This fame pattern continues with ‘.. this story shall the good man teach his son... ‘ giving the idea that their story will be passed down for generations and generations. They will become role models as such for young boys, helping them to become good people.

He continues to make the men feel unique with ‘.. We few, we happy few.. ‘ Repetition of the word ‘ few’ makes the men feel that they should be glad to be a part of something that so few people have the opportunity to be a part of. He goes on to promote this idea of uniqueness with the words, ‘.. we band of brothers.. ‘ as if the men have become family through fighting for their country. Henry then proclaims that: ‘.. he... that sheds his blood with me... shall be my brother.. ‘ He has stated that each man is his equal, making them feel honoured. The poem is rounded off with the thought that ‘..

Gentlemen in England, now abed.. ‘ would feel accursed that they weren’t here fighting with us. And they would ‘.. hold their manhoods cheap.. ‘ whenever anyone speaks who fought on Saint Crispin’s day. He is making the men feel that they are superior to those who didn’t fight, and that men in England would give anything to be them right now. The poem promotes heroism very effectively, using images of fame and kings to inspire the men.

This poem was obviously extremely effective because these men won the Battle of Agincourt against extraordinary odds.

Although, in *Dulce et Decorum Est*, written by Wilfred Owen there is a completely different message conveyed. ' *Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori*' is Latin for: ' it is sweet and honourable to die for one's country. ' It is a strongly anti-war poem in which Owen describes events from personal experience. In the first stanza, Owen depicts a group of soldiers as they march.

He describes their gaunt appearance, speaking of ' lost boots' and lost senses. He goes on, in the second stanza to illustrate the reaction of the men to the cries of: ' gas! GAS! ' There is ' An ecstasy of fumbling.. One man, possibly known by Owen is slow to respond. Owen recalls the horror of his death toward the end of the stanza and subsequently writes his next stanza, consisting only of two lines, about the terrible dreams he has about the experience.

This leads Owen on to comment bitterly and vividly about the incident, finishing his final stanza off with: ' The old lie: *Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori*' If Owen is to achieve his desired effect, he has to be as vivid and evocative as possible. In the first stanza, Owen begins with two similes in the first two lines, describing soldiers as ' old beggars under sacks' and ' hags. Likening the soldiers to old beggars under sacks gives the reader an indication of the sheer weight of what had to be carried, while likening them to hags, completely dehumanising them.

This stanza paints a picture of what it was like for these young men; using words like ‘trudge’ to suggest heavy movements. We get a zombie like impression as ‘.. Men marched asleep.’ from the exhaustion of body and mind. Also, it suggests that the men march without point i. e. all hope has been lost, as the ‘five-nines’ (bombs) fall behind. In the second stanza there is a clear change in tempo, (it begins with a command) ‘Gas!

GAS! Quick, boys! ‘There is ‘an ecstasy of fumbling’ showing that it seemed to take a long time to fit the ‘clumsy helmets.’ Here, the helmets are personified to help to describe the awkwardness of the things. Water imagery is used to show what mustard gas was like. Phrases like misty panes, green sea and drowning do this very effectively. The third stanza is very tense as it goes on to explain how Owen dreams of the man choking to death as he stands helpless. Again, water imagery is used as the man ‘plunges’ at Owen in desperation while Owen must watch him ‘.. uttering, choking, drowning.’

In the final stanza, Owen asks you to ‘pace behind the wagon that we flung him in.’ the use of the word ‘flung’ suggests casualness and insignificance. Owen involves the reader with phrases like ‘you’ and ‘you too.’ There is alliteration of the letter ‘w’ as he asks the reader to ‘.. watch the white eyes writhing in his face..’ He describes ‘His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin... obscene as cancer... incurable sores on innocent tongues..’ a description to horrify the most unsympathetic of persons.

He addresses the reader as ‘my friend’ showing bitter irony, and states that ‘you would not tell with high zest to children... The old Lie: Dulce et decorum

est Pro patria mori' This poem is extremely effective in making the ideology that war is an honourable and dignified thing disappear using horrific, vivid images to do so. To sum up, I feel that all three poems are effective in their own styles. However, some are more effective than others. Henry V is more effective than The Volunteer in supporting the ideology that war is honourable and dignified.

This is so in my opinion due to the way it cleverly gives off the impression that the men fighting will be remembered as heroes by comparing them to kings. Also, it concentrates more on what the men will do when they return home, not if they return home. The Volunteer uses images of death and an epitaph style opening to convey the message of a valiant death. I don't think that making the reader think of death will inspire him or her to fight for their country at all. Dulce est Decorum Est is the most effective poem of the three.

It's usage of vivid and horrific imagery could make any patriotic citizen think again before going to war. The structure of the poem is extremely well thought out because it begins to get extremely shocking in the final stanza, almost certainly making the reader sway away from the honourable image he or she had of war before reading. It then finishes with labelling Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori a lie. This is intelligent because the reader is at his most easily influenced after reading the horrific description in the final stanza and therefore is more likely to agree with this point.